BrUNIMA Bulletin No 104

JULY 2000

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EDITOR – ROBERT FOWLER

JULY 2000 104

Editorial

Relief. Not relief at this being my last issue as editor, but relief that Cariad Astles and Chris Abbott have stepped into the breach. My reasons for stepping down, after a relatively short haul (certainly compared with my illustrious predecessor, marathon man John Blundall), have nothing to do with any lack of enjoyment in the post but everything to do with other, growing commitments and demands on my time. I feel happy that the *Bulletin* is now in two safe pairs of hands, although Chris and Cariad have said that a third-editor to share the task would be most welcome. I am very much looking forward as a reader, albeit no doubt still submitting the occasional item, to the different perspective and insight (there is more than one way to string a marionette) that their experiences will provide.

The temptation to make a Hollywood Oscar Night speech, thanking by name all the numerous generous people – members as well as, it should be recalled, nonmembers – who have contributed articles to the publication or helped in other ways will be resisted, but you know who you are and your efforts have been very gratifying. I hope that in future even more of you will send in material, whether it be light, heavyweight, or somewhere in between. It is the only way that a members' publication can work. However, I must make one or, rather, two exceptions to anonymity. Ray DaSilva's, for the most part, behind-the-scenes activity, whether suggesting people to contact or leads to follow, making all of his considerable accumulated knowledge and his library and archive available to me, his considerable and freely given investment of time, and his meticulous approach to the look of the publication, have made it infinitely superior to what it would have been in my unaided hands. The other person who deserves not to remain incognito is Joan DaSilva. She has allowed me to invade her house at all hours and has proved unfailing in her welcome. It has been a pleasure to be in their close company.

I know I made a few general aspirational points when I took over. I have not reread that opening editorial since and certainly have no intention of drawing up here any kind of balance sheet. Suffice it to say that there will undoubtedly have been entries in both the debit and credit ledgers, all I hope is that there has been – and we are all, fortunately, individuals, with our own likes and dislikes, sometimes strong ones – enough in this triannual, enough of the time, for each of you to have found perusing it more treat than chore.

If I may stray a little "out of area" (the indulgence an editor can permit himself), I should just like to say that in these last four years I have necessarily paid more attention to the activities of all the various puppetry bodies in this country than I otherwise might and I have been very heartened by how much more active and cooperative we have all become. On which note I will end.

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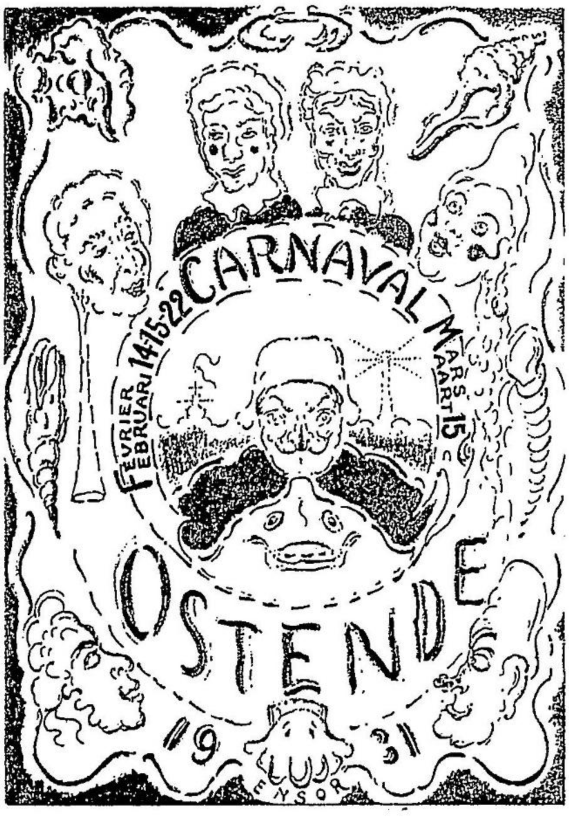
John Phillips Memorial Lecture 2000
The Grotesque: The Sublime and The Ridiculous Art of James Ensor

(to be delivered in the Boardroom, University of Brighton, at 2.30, 22 October)

As you will know from the previous issue, this year's Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Dr John Furse. John is an art historian associated with the University of Plymouth who, as writer/critic, has regularly contributed to national and international art journals and is the author of numerous catalogue essays. His friendship with John Phillips led to his involvement with UNIMA, though his interest in marionettes predates his membership of our organization, he having earlier written a play, *FRIDOLIN UNMASKED – An Incident in the Life of James Ensor*, for John Phillips' Theatre Grotesque. John Furse writes: "Theatre Grotesque and the obsession with the 'over-the-top' Sublime art of painter and set- and stage-designer James de Loutherbourg introduced me to the Phillips notion of 'entertainment.' I admit to a certain scepticism when he said that he 'ate fire'! Then later came James Ensor and a quite ridiculous Art. The Lecture, while not quite an admission – made on the road to Damascus – of total conversion to the thinking behind the weird and wonderful world John had in mind sets out belatedly to admit that there was once upon a time a certain commonsense in what he believed in. On a personal note, come the day, I fully expect to be struck by a thunderbolt from above – or, more likely, from below – accompanied by the familiar stentorian bellow 'Bloody 'ell!'"



1931 Canival Poster by James Ensor (1860-1949)

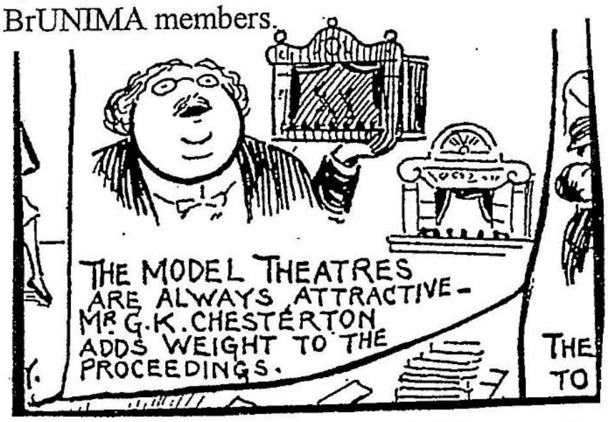
Clowes-Tillers

This issue is not carrying the promised extended piece on the Victorian marionettes because we are exploring a means of bringing out a booklet containing the numerous contributions received on diverse aspects of the figures from restoration to performance. I have reversed the customary word order here in deference to George Speaight, who considers – and he should know – that the Clowes figures are superior to the Tillers.

A Diamond Occasion

Ray DaSilva

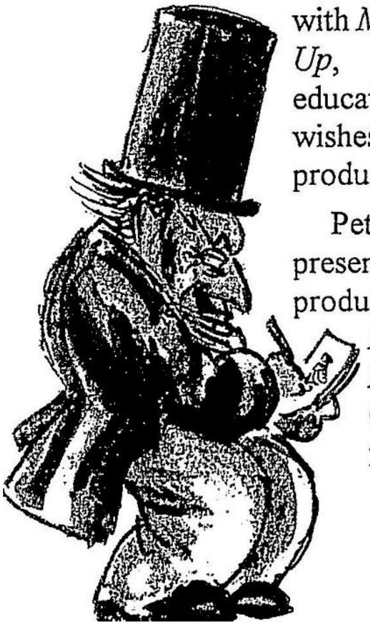
The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild brought out its big guns to provide our entertainment at its 75th birthday celebration held at the Puppet Centre on 25 April. In keeping with the Guild's beginnings, the whole evening was devoted to the Juvenile Drama. George Speaight presented *Sleeping Beauty* (as did Richard Traynor at the Guild's 1925 exhibition, opened by Gilbert Chesterton), Peter Baldwin performed *Alone in the Pirate's Lair*, and Peter Peasgood *Escape from Covent Garden*. All three presentations were enthusiastically received by the adult audience, which included several BrUNIMA members.


THE MODEL THEATRES ARE ALWAYS ATTRACTIVE - MR G.K. CHESTERTON ADDS WEIGHT TO THE PROCEEDINGS.
THE
TO

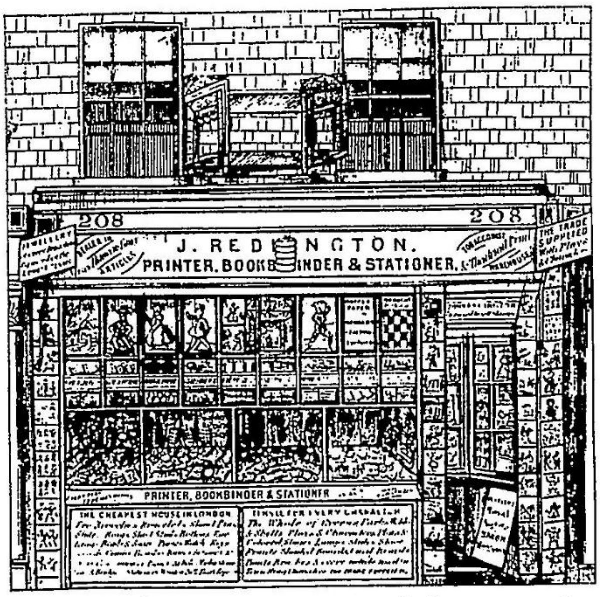
We congratulate the Guild on its achievements over the last three-quarters of a century and, notably, its Millennium festival at Doncaster and wish them well.

Just in case anyone has doubts, the Juvenile Drama is very much alive and well. Robert Poulter has recently completed a successful season at the National Gallery with *Mr Turner Gets Steamed Up*, and the Gallery's education department now wishes to commission a new production for next year.

Peter Peasgood will also present a commissioned production, *The Life of Elizabeth Fry, Prison Reformer*, at Leicester Costume Museum on 20 August.



Toy Theatre figure by Robert Poulter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J. REDINGTON.
PRINTER. BOOKBINDER & STATIONER.
PRINTER, BOOKBINDER & STATIONER
THE CHEAPEST HOUSE IN LONDON

A fascinating, unprogrammed item at the Guild's birthday event was a screening of a brief Gaumont Mirror newsreel showing Benjamin Pollock printing toy theatre sheets at his Hoxton workshop in 1927.

The illustration above from *The Story of Benjamin Pollock's Toy Museum* is the shop that Benjamin Pollock inherited from his father-in-law, John Redington – it was later renumbered 73 Hoxted Street. If Pollock had only kept a visitors book we would have seen signatures of Charles Dickens, RL Stevenson, Winston Churchill, Lupino Lane, Ellen Terry, Gordon Craig, and Charlie Chaplin along with many others. This "Theatrical Print Warehouse" is no longer there, it suffered bomb damage in 1944, was boarded up, and later demolished. But the Juvenile Drama continues to thrive.

Preetz

The 13th Preetz Paper Theatre Festival – the largest such international event – expects to welcome 15 companies from eight countries 15-17 September, when 60 performances will be given. Preetz is between Kiel and Lübeck. (See *Bulletin* No 96 for a John Phillips review of the 1997 festival.)

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Fasulis - Traditional Glove Puppetry In Greece

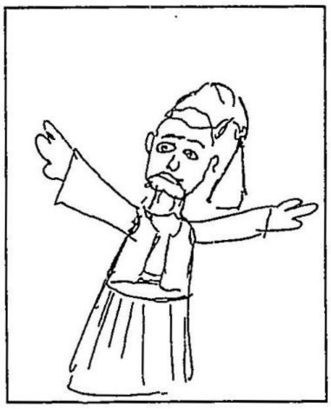
John Morley

For most of us, any mention of puppetry in Greece will generally bring to mind images of the enormously popular shadow figure Karaghiozis. There is, however, another tradition, known as *Fasulis*, using glove puppets, which was a popular form of entertainment, particularly in Athens, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The present article is an attempt to present – possibly for the first time in English – a detailed account of this little-known tradition.

Most of the information presented here is to be found in the excellent monograph on the subject by the Austrian historian of popular Greek puppet theatre, Walter Puchner, now a professor at the University of Athens. His text, *Fasulis*, published in 1978, contains information partly gleaned from a study tour undertaken in Greece between 1971 and 1972. It is probably the only serious study of the phenomenon available in any language.

As well as examining other scattered references, I have also drawn on a book which first appeared in 1977 entitled *Kouklotheatro* by Pepis Darakis, who devotes the whole of Chapter Four to the history of modern Greek puppetry.

It is no surprise that puppetry should have flourished in Greece, as it is unique in having a long-standing theatrical tradition dating back to at least the 6th century BC. Interestingly, even the modern Greek term for puppet or doll – *koukla* – is believed by some scholars to be derived from a Middle Greek word. There are cognate forms of *koukla* in languages as diverse as Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, Turkish, Albanian and even Romany. A puppeteer is a *kouklopechtis* (literally, "puppet player," cf the German *Puppenspieler*). A less common term for puppet in Greek is *andrikelo* ("doll," "dummy," "manikin"), not unlike the Spanish *muñeco*.



Sketch by Eugenios Spatharis

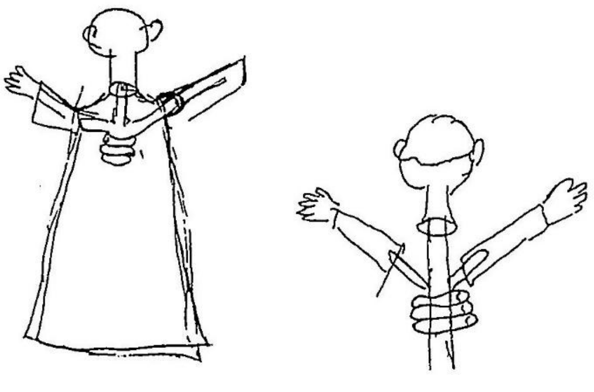
Prior to the arrival of *Fasulis*, the main form of puppetry in Greece was the shadow theatre, whose protagonist is Karaghiozis, a character the Greeks inherited from the Ottoman Turks. The first unequivocal reference to the existence of *Karaghiozis* in Greece comes in 1809 (from John Hobhouse in Ioannina, Epirus). *Karaghiozis* went through a period of transition (when performances began to be given in Greek rather than Turkish) between 1850 and 1880, after which time the character became truly Greek, helped in large measure by the reforms introduced by the shadow player "Mimaros." Karaghiozis, together with his boon companion Chatziavatis, came to embody the spirit of the Greek people in their protracted struggle against Ottoman occupation. The Greeks grew to love *Karaghiozis* as the plays were intimately related to their recent history and featured readily identifiable regional types. *Fasulis*, on the other hand, was a very different kind of performance.

As is so often the case with puppet heroes, both the provenance of the character and the etymology of the name remain obscure. One account suggests that the tradition may have started around 1855 with an unnamed Italian showman who took his old glove puppets to Corfu and Zakinthos, two of the Ionian islands, in western Greece. These islands, which were annexed to Greece in 1864 (never having fallen to the Turks), had already witnessed a flowering of theatrical activity in the 18th century, presumably as a result of the Venetian influence there.

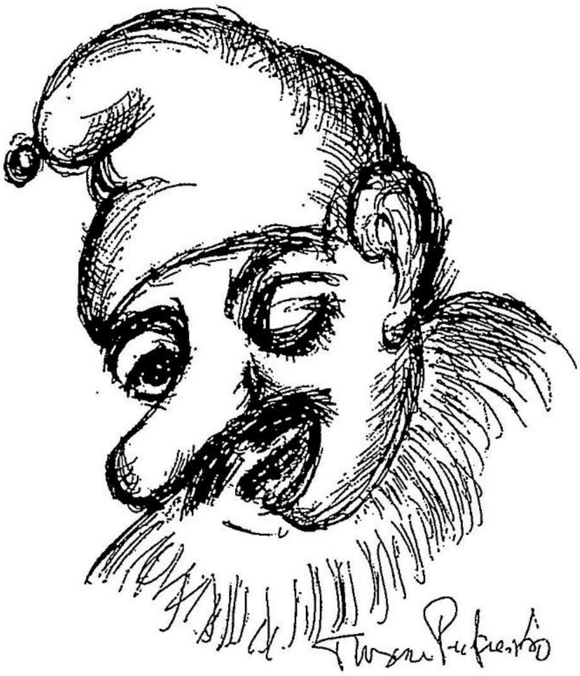
The arrival of this *burattinaio*, so the story goes, coincided with a serious outbreak of cholera on the islands. He was therefore forced to flee, leaving his puppets behind in his haste. A few years later, as local people were recovering from the effects of the epidemic, another itinerant showman (possibly Andreas Stravos) is said to have found the puppets and started performing with them. He used such figures as Pulcinellas, Arlekinos, Colombina, Cassandros, Facanapas and Conte-Denios, and is believed to have been active on Zakinthos by about 1880.

Yet another puppeteer, this time from the port of Piraeus, is alleged to have taken glove puppetry from the Ionian islands to Athens in about 1870, the first booth being set up in Theseion Square. However, the earliest *Fasulis* performer we have any real evidence for was a certain Maridakis, who, again, probably hailed from the Ionian islands and whose show was a familiar sight in Athens around 1900. The next player we know of was Christos Konitsiotis (possibly Maridakis's apprentice), who died in 1928.

As regards the name of the puppet, there are two forms, either Fasulis or Fasuli (stress is always on the final syllable in both forms). The word may derive from the Greek *fasoli* meaning "(kidney) bean," which in turn may come from the Italian *fagiolo*. This is almost certainly the origin of Faggiolino (or Fasolino, Fasulein), the impudent street urchin from Bologna, a glove puppet closely associated with the Campogalliani family. It is not inconceivable that one of the early puppeteers featured Fagiolino in his shows, perhaps altering the name to Fasulis. An odd name, perhaps, but it should be borne in mind that European actors and puppeteers in the 18th and 19th centuries seem to have had a penchant for naming their creations after types of food popular with the common people (cf the German Hanswurst, the French Jean Potage and the Hungarian Paprika Jancsi).



Construction and operation



Sketch by the artist Johann Romano as remembered from his childhood in Athens from 1900-1910. From *Kouklotheatro* by Pepis Darakis.

Turning to his physical appearance, Fasulis has quite an ugly face, with a prominent nose and moustache (a feature shared by the Turkish İbiş, the Egyptian Aragoz and early manifestations of the Neapolitan Pulcinella and English Punchinello in the 17th century). Traditionally, he has one eye closed, perhaps to emphasize his sagacity or to indicate that he is partially blind. He wears a tall red hat – either conical or floppy – or a fez with a large yellow tassel, which he often spins round whenever he is pleased about something or being aggressive. He often wears a multicoloured costume, although the sketch made for Puchner by Eugenios Spatharis in 1972 shows him as a wholly Greek figure, complete with Anatolian-style waistcoat and *fustanella* (pleated kilt).

Originally, he was vivacious, artful and naturally quick-witted. He was prone to bragging, grumbling and swearing and, although fond of playing tricks, was nevertheless well-meaning. Like Punch, he often carried a stick and was given a loud nasal voice, but Puchner does not think the "swazzle" was ever used for this. The puppeteers, many of whom were also *Karaghiozis* players, would have been quite used to producing nasal tones for characters such as the grotesque dwarf Omorfonios. Of all the various puppet heroes, Fasulis seems to bear the closest resemblance to İbiş and Faggiolino.

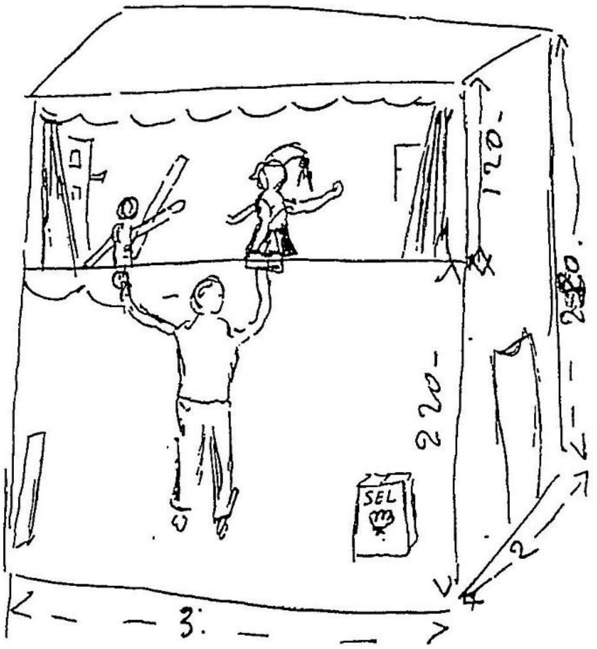
Although we can have some idea of what early *Fasulis* shows were like from written sources, illustrations are extremely rare. To date, I know of no contemporaneous paintings or photographs of a *Fasulis* performance, showmen or sets of figures. The most useful reference is the wonderful line drawing by a certain Johann Romano of Maridakis's Fasulis, as he recalled seeing him in Athens in the first decade of the 20th century: it shows a smiling Fasulis wearing a hat with a pompom and a large ruff. Nothing is known of the artist, however, apart from his name.

The earliest written references to *Fasulis* come from the pen of G. Souris, a poet and political satirist, in the Greek newspaper *Romios*. From 1883 onwards, he used the figures of Fasulis and his partner Perikletos (or Perikles) to criticize current affairs. He wrote an article entitled "Fasulis Talks to Mrs Fasulis" at the time of the Silver Jubilee of King George I (New Year, 1888), "Fasulis and Perikletos Extol the New Year" (1890), and "The Mad Apocalypse of Fasulis the Prophet," as well as a poem, "Fasulis the Philosopher." Interesting as these pieces are, Puchner doubts whether Souris actually witnessed a live performance.

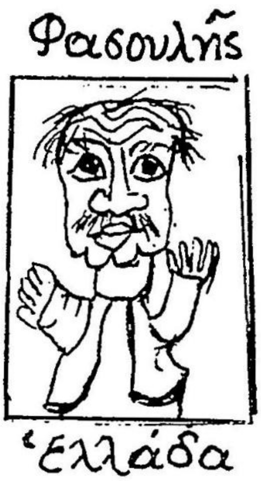
Further references appear in other Greek periodicals of the time. Babis Anninos, writing in *Estia* (1888), mentions, inter alia, *Fasulis*'s association with Corfu. Much valuable information is contained in "O Fasulis," an article by GB Tsokopoulos in *Parnassos* XV (1892), where he makes it clear that *Fasulis* appealed more to the lower classes. An article in *Estia* (1894) mentions the censorship of both *Fasulis* and *Karaghiozis*. NI Vasiliadis lists Fasulis and Perikletos alongside other well-known puppet heroes in "To Turkikon Theatron: o Karaghiozis" in *Ethnikon Imerologion Skoku* (1895). Finally, there are two articles in *Fare* (1896) which make passing references to the triviality of *Fasulis* shows.

Fasulis consisted of either sketches or two- to three-act playlets and was performed in booths of varying dimensions. The type described by Eugenios Spatharis measured 3m x 2m x 3.40m and had a large proscenium. Puchner states that a typical booth would be made of wood and be painted with floral designs: the early ones were apparently made of thick cardboard, to be replaced at a later date by canvas. The scenery often consisted of a painted background depicting the sea, a forest, village or two houses, one on either side. Lighting, if needed, would be provided by oil or acetylene lamps. The performer might have a table behind him with all his figures at the ready as well as at least one assistant.

The puppets themselves often measured between 40 and 50cm and "heroic" figures might be even taller. They were originally made of wood and later cardboard (presumably in the form of papier mâché).



This illustration, the one at the bottom opposite and also that on the previous page are all from Walter Puchner's book – see bibliography.



Fasulis was often performed to the accompaniment of a small "orchestra" seated on a wooden platform in front of the booth. The most common instruments were the clarinet, guitar, accordion and bass drum, which suggests that performances were not only lively but somewhat noisy too. *Fasulis* was most frequently to be seen in Athens on warm summer evenings, especially at weekends or whenever there was a festival. Performances might conclude around midnight.

Apart from the eponymous hero, the stock characters in these plays were Perikletos (his partner or servant), Aurelios (his landlord), Androfile (his fiancée), Pandolfa (the latter's mother), various "heroic" figures, a black Devil and a great many others. Unfortunately, I have been unable to trace any description of what these figures actually looked like.

Maridakis is believed to have been the creator of Perikletos, who was an argumentative rival to Fasulis, constantly reprimanding him and hitting him over the head with a stick. Christos Konitsiotis, a highly-regarded showman in his day, played in areas such as Dexameni in Kolonaki, Athens. He was a skilful performer and eventually outshone his master, Maridakis. He adapted themes from the works of Molière and doubled the number of puppets. For some unknown reason, he altered the name of the hero to Paschalis (possibly from the Italian "Pasquale"). Although he retained his basic traits, he attempted to mellow the character to make him acceptable to a more middle-class audience. As the finale to his shows, the Devil would appear to take Paschalis down to hell, but Paschalis would always emerge victorious in the end and leave the stage spinning his long tassel round in the air like the rotors of a helicopter! We are told that Konitsiotis made sure that money was collected from the audience well before they dispersed. Georgios Rotas, one of Konitsiotis's colleagues, later replaced Perikletos with Revithis (from the Greek for "chickpea"), who was a rather dull-witted servant type.

The actual content of the plays is a matter for speculation. There are apparently no eyewitness accounts of a complete performance, and the few showmen Puchner consulted were generally not very helpful in this regard. However, a certain amount may be inferred from the few – somewhat curious – titles known to us. These include: *Androfile's Wedding*; *Fasulis the Reluctant Doctor*; *Faith, Hope and Charity*; *Heaven and Hell*; *The Master Outside*; *The Devil as Adviser*; *The Broad Beans*; *Mrs Yannula and the Grocer's Gun*; *Mr Manolis and his Barber*; *The Three Criminals of St Sideras*; *Christos Davelis the Brigand Chief*; and *The Apocrypha of General Belisar* (the latter possibly referring to the famous general Belisarius who served under the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the 6th century AD).

In his 1892 article, Tsokopoulos informs us that the most popular play in the cycle was *Androfile's Wedding*, which was performed more often than "all Greek *komidillia* put together." The *komidillio* was the Greek equivalent of the Spanish *zarzuela,* that is, a light comic operetta, popular towards the end of the 19th century, which treated themes from everyday life in the Greek provinces.

Unfortunately, there are no extant texts, as far as I am aware. This may be due to the fact that *Fasulis* was essentially part of an oral tradition which relied on spontaneity and improvisation or because the dialogue in some of the plays may have contained obscenities. The only – albeit brief – example of early dialogue that has been preserved for us is to be found in Tsokopoulos's article, where he cites a typical ending for a *Fasulis* show, which seems to have a ring of authenticity. He says that Fasulis would come on and declare: "Dear Athenians! Be advised that tomorrow evening, I, Fasulis, will be giving a charity performance. Quiet, please, clarinet, so I can say something! So we'd like all you nice people to come along with your families. We'll be doing *The Apocrypha of General Belisar* and singing songs from Plaka .... There'll be Bengal lights, too!" (Plaka is the name of the area immediately below the Acropolis).

Such end-of-performance announcements were commonplace in the Turkish *Karagöz*, too, and, like *Karagöz*, we may assume that the dialogue was fast-moving and larded with feeble *kalambouria* (puns). Fasulis was usually portrayed as a wily comic servant and the stories he appeared in would seem to be similar to the İbiş plays witnessed by the German scholar Otto Spies while on a study tour in Istanbul in 1954. (These are reproduced almost verbatim in his outstanding work *Türkisches Puppentheater*, published in 1959). As with İbiş, Fasulis seems to owe much to the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*.

From the evidence that survives, it is abundantly clear that there was a frequent exchange of ideas from one genre to another. Indeed, Puchner is now of the opinion that the Greek puppet theatre had much closer ties with the shadow theatre than has hitherto been realized. For example, the renowned "Mimaros," who died in 1912, is believed to have drawn on themes from *Fasulis* as part of his reforms for *Karaghiozis*. Conversely, it was normal practice for *Fasulis* players to take themes from the shadow theatre, presumably to appeal to a wider audience and, no doubt, to help supplement their income.

Fasulis enjoyed its greatest popularity between the early 1880s and late 1920s, a period which might legitimately be termed the "golden age" of glove puppetry. It clearly faced stiff competition from other forms of *theatridia* (theatrical performances) such as *Karaghiozis*, opera and comedies from France and Italy, farces, satirical sketches and music hall acts. These trends also obtained in Cairo and Alexandria, as European opera and drama had been actively promoted by the Khedive Ismail. Greek dramatists wrestled with a linguistic problem – whether to use the pure, literary language (*katharevousa*) or the colloquial form (*dimotiki*) in their dialogue, and Egyptian playwrights faced precisely the same dilemma in Arabic. More humble productions, such as *Fasulis*, would have employed the vernacular.

Fasulis played largely to a lower-class audience and frequently met with the disapproval of the authorities, who clearly believed it was less than edifying entertainment. In fact, it was officially prohibited in the early 1890s, along with other types of *theatridia*. Nevertheless, the tradition managed to survive owing to the efforts of showmen such as Konitsiotis, whose popularity began to give some cause for concern among theatre companies. Several idioms entered the language at that time, namely "She looks like a Konitsiotis puppet!" (said of an ugly woman), "How can you catch him? He's jumping out of the window!" (said of a "slippery" individual) and "You can't catch old Fasulis!" Interestingly, the idiom "to be as pleased as Punch" has its exact equivalent in Greek.

Konitsiotis, too, had an apprentice, "Miltos," who was active in Kifissia, Athens, up until about 1935. Several other shadow players are known to have performed *Fasulis*, including Eugenios Spatharis himself, "Barba" Stathis of Thessaloniki, Spyros Kouzaros and Antonios Karasteriopoulos ("Tolias").

Fasulis gradually fell out of favour with the general public, having failed to eclipse the popularity of *Karaghiozis*. This may be because it was still a fairly recent addition to the theatrical scene or because of the subject matter of the plays. From the very outset, there was only ever a handful of professional

Fasulis players so it is easy to understand why the tradition began to disappear.

Georgios Rotas (1875-1975), by all accounts a very versatile performer, continued to alter the character of Fasulis and used him in a pedagogical context. His shows were aimed at very young audiences. He used fairly simple figures and had a portable wooden booth. He could produce a range of voices for his many characters and was an excellent singer, making regular broadcasts for Radio Athens. He continued to perform during the dark days of the Second World War and became associated with the Barba Mytousis Theatre in Athens, which had been set up by Elenis Theocharis-Perakis in 1940.

It is interesting to note that *Fasulis* began to decline in the 1930s, as this was also the time of the demise of other puppet heroes, such as Pahlvan Kachal in Iran and Uzbekistan. Fasulis eventually became a very bland version of his former self in the hands of Theocharis-Perakis, who was also interested in the educational potential of puppets for small children. Her Fasulis degenerated into a friendly boy clown – a fate similar to that which befell the German Kasper and French Guignol.

Theocharis-Perakis was greatly influenced by contemporary French puppetry and produced plays for her rod puppets based on adaptations of ancient Greek myths, Aesop's fables and themes from daily life. Her most enduring creations were Barba ("Uncle") Mytousis (the affable presenter of her shows) and the mischievous little girl Souvlitsa, who was constantly nagging her long-suffering brother, Klouvios.

There are, to the best of my knowledge, no museums with *Fasulis* puppets, although a few do have collections of *Karaghiozis* figures. On a trip to Athens and the Peloponnese in August 1991, I managed to find the studio of Kostas Sokaras in Adrianou Street, Plaka, and was delighted to note that there was a large Fasulis puppet on sale alongside some excellent camel-leather *Karaghiozis* figures. There were several other glove puppets, including a male figure with a top hat, moustache and bow-tie, reminiscent of Gnafron in *Guignol*. They were crudely made and had hand-painted heads. Needless to say, I was keen to find out more about these figures and the tradition in general, but was unable to do so owing to the inadequacies of my spoken Greek.

There is undoubtedly a great deal yet to be discovered about *Fasulis*. Fortunately, Professor Puchner informs me that he may well write a further – updated – dissertation on Greek glove puppetry sometime in the near future. I await publication of his findings with great interest.

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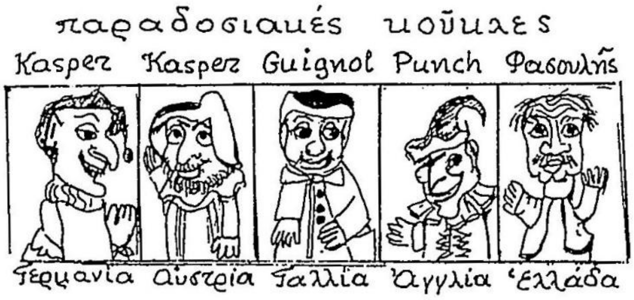
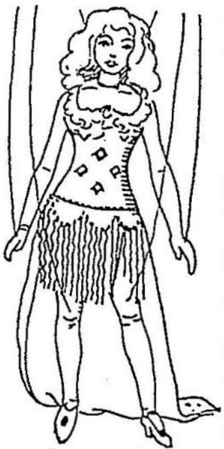
5.) Theocharis-Perakis, Elenis: *Kouklotheatro – Techni ke Techniki*, Hestia, Athens (1988)

6.) Fournel, Paul (ed): *Les Marionnettes*, Bordas, Paris (1982)



The Wrexham preacher Joseph Jenkins, breathing fire and brimstone against the idolatry of puppets, who is mentioned in passing in the following essay, figured, of course, on our pages quite recently, in David Powell's article (*Bulletin* No 102). I know that John Phillips, our much-loved and missed treasurer, greatly enjoyed Payne's essay below, which anyone who knew his interests would understand. Its author lived just around the corner from him in Lon Y Dial, and in a letter to his namesake, Jane Phillips, dated 25 April 1997, he writes: "Francis Payne was regarded as a somewhat eccentric little man but always seemed amiable enough to me." He goes on to write entertainingly that "there were quite a lot of eccentrics living in that street, including a dipsomaniac, whose front garden was full of bottles, my father was always lifting him out of the gutter – it was known as Little Moscow."

This essay was brought to our attention by Jane Phillips, who believes that the marionettes and waxworks featured were those of the famous D'Arc company. This slightly shortened version of it is reproduced with the permission of Meic Stephens, copyright-holder and translator. *Chwaryddion Crwydrol* was first published in *Chwaryddion Crwydrol ac Ysgrifau Eraill* (1943). The translation by Meic Stephens is available in his *Illuminations: An Anthology of Welsh Short Prose,* published by Welsh Academic Press, 1998, ISBN 1-86057-016-X.



A D'Arc Fairy drawn by H Whanslaw

Strolling Players

An essay by Ffransis G Payne

We were talking about the theatre. "When I was a lad," said the old man, "I saw a performance given in a tent by a company of strolling players. I have never seen better acting since. Those people could break your heart with just one little gesture...." I ventured to agree with him – too heartily, perhaps. For he was very annoyed: "Agree, indeed! What do you know about them? Such people had disappeared long before you were born." But my friend was mistaken. Yes, I too had seen the strolling players, and I too had felt a pang in the heart.

I should never have done so had not ours been a small country town. You know the kind of place: like Brecon or Builth or Kington. Quiet little places, aren't they? Yet life there is varied and complex. It would be easier to sum up life in London, England, than in Llundain Fach in the vale of Aeron. For in a town like ours you live on a boundary, indeed, on many boundaries. Not only between small town and countryside, but on the boundary between small town and town, and between town and city, too. For in a small country town there are elements of all of these. Some are ageless, like the apple trees in your garden, or the west wind bringing the scent of bracken into the narrow streets. Others are more recent intrusions, like the branch railway from towns to the east, while others are spiritual vanities from much further afield, such as the Civic Spirit.

[....] Here remain the old customs of a previous age that have come down from the city and through the town, and so to the small town. The ways of the modern world come too. Though they come late, come they will in turn like the fine clothes of the proud man to his kinsman of lowlier estate. The years dawdle in the small town, for although the Civic Spirit holds the main door ajar, all the stubborn sullenness of the old country life presses against the backdoor.

Sooner or later there would come to our town what neither city nor large town wanted any more. Especially people. [....] From time to time a company of players would come to perform in the public hall. They were always getting on in years, and their powers of improvisation nearly extinguished. The plays were old-fashioned and crude. They had all the appearance of people with some curse upon them, who had gathered outside a city that no longer wanted them, and who were bound together to decline on a meaner stage, where their feeble gifts might shine more brightly, while keeping up the appearance of talent and enjoyment of life. The companies would invariably announce that they intended staying "for one week only." But they all stayed for a month. Where else could they go? Beyond the town the countryside lay among its quiet hills, sullenly indulging its own native talents. It would take a month for them to hear of another place that was willing to take them, let alone scrape together enough to pay their debts before moving on.

Sometimes, too, there came individuals with the dust of the roads on their boots – Punch and Judy men, professors of magic and illusion, fire-eaters, one-man bands – all the old-fashioned, discarded playthings of the big cities. And one day a troupe of strolling players came, with a portable theatre made of wood and canvas.

These people were of a different quality from all the others. I don't know where they came from to our town. Not from a city and certainly not from a large town, for such places had not seen the likes of these for a generation or more. Cities in those days were fewer in number and smaller. It was announced that they would be staying with us for a month, but it was generally known that they had provisions to last a twelvemonth. At first, there was a different play each night, "preceded by a hilarious farce," as the publicity leaflets put it. Even after the month had stretched into several months there were never less than three different shows each week. It's true they put on some rubbish at first. Perhaps they were trying to compete with the company that played the public hall. But although they started with bombast and fustian they came eventually to high spirits and heart-break, taking the long road from East Lynne and Uncle Tom's Cabin to the Forest of Arden and that fatal field by Dover.

It was a hard road for them. In time it became clear that our small town could not go on supporting a playhouse. The town's traditions were against it, too. We made our own entertainments, while at the same time grateful for occasional help from outside. And so the players began to decline, step by step, through the various grades of lodgings which the town provided: from the velvet parlours of respectable houses down to the bare severity of the establishment kept by Jones Clean Beds. This was a pilgrimage that was only too familiar to the new arrivals. The thin, city accent that boasted in the hearing of regulars at the Oxford Arms was eventually to be heard cadging a drink in the Bridge Tavern. Many an old pilgrim crawled in the direction of Jones's house! I can still see the pensive faces of some of them, ranged in my mind's eye like divines in a framed picture. But the players were a bunch on their own: it's easier to hear their voices and laughter than it is to see them.

I came to know some of them quite well. We used to keep a draper's shop, and this often proved convenient for the wardrobe man from the playhouse. Fashions changed sooner or later, even in our town, and there would always be some old old stock available for a church bazaar and other such occasions. To this material some of the productions owed some small part of their splendour. I have seen Lady Macbeth listening to the dread knocking at the castle's door and clad in something unsaleable from the shop. And I saw, more than once, gleaming beyond the footlights, a piece of white cardboard (usually from a blouse box) that was meant to be the shirt-front of a gentleman in evening dress.

Before long some of the players found their way from the shop into our house, because my sister thought she might learn some fancy dance steps from them. From that moment on the house became like a theatre. There was high-stepping in the kitchen and, amidst the whirl of lead-weighted skirts, low curtseying in the parlour.

But they taught us more than dancing. They demonstrated for us an inexplicable courage and indomitable high spirits, though their stomachs were as empty as their pockets. Nothing seemed to come amiss with them, neither experience nor food. Well, that may be a bit of an exaggeration, for as their season in our town wore on, they grew poorer and poorer. Their playhouse became so tattered that nothing could be done for it. The canvas roof resembled a strainer for collecting rain and pouring it on to the few heads beneath. The tent stood in a field near an old barn in which, it was said, the child Sarah Siddons first went on a stage. The seating in the tent was made of planks that rose in steps towards the rear. The admission was twopence to the gallery, up the steps, and that was the most comfortable place of all. There you could put your feet between the people who sat on the lower bench in front of you. Your feet would be dry and your legs warm. Down in the sixpenny seats you would have been trampling the mud like swine. Some heat was given out by braziers placed here and there in the aisles between the benches. The invisible smoke from the burning coke nearly chokes me as I bring it to mind. Finally, the stage was lit by carbide gas.

It was not only the stage that was lit by the gas-machine. Light was cast on many a mishap and blunder by its erratic working. As the months went by it became the custom to find your way to your seat only by the dim light of the braziers. When the time came for "the hilarious farce" to begin, the director would come on stage with a lighted candle in his hand. "Ladies and gentlemen," he would say, "I regret to inform you that a completely unforeseeable accident has befallen the lighting equipment. Nevertheless, our gifted engineer is busily at work, and I hope he will enlighten us soon. In the meanwhile, by your leave, I shall recite those immortal lines...." We didn't mind this addition to the programme in the least. We understood one another perfectly. The elocutionist knew that everyone was aware that "the gifted engineer" had just collected enough money at the door to enable him to run down to Meredith's shop for carbide.

The players could not have put on any tragedy that would have made you feel feebler than did their own woeful plight. Could I not help thinking, at a moment of high terror in the play, of where Lady Macbeth's costume had come from? There was something amiss in their attempts to convey fear and misery and terror. You felt they were acting. Perhaps they were too familiar with grief, and couldn't break through the perpetual forbearance that was their daily defence. It takes a very happy and contented man to portray all the agony of creatures such as Lear or Othello. Only such a man is able to immerse himself in all the horrors of the imagination. But there was no such man or woman or child in this company. They were Falstaff's children, every one. On stage or off they kept up a cheerful front, spinning yarns and pretending and scraping and starving – and laughing all the while.

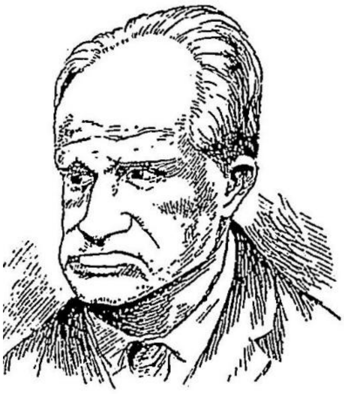
Falstaff is among the greatest – and saddest – creations of the world's imagination. But in the flesh, the world doesn't want anything to do with him. For he is the enemy of the Civic Spirit. As I have suggested, that spirit would sometimes sweep through our town as abruptly as the wind from the east, rattling the inn signs and stirring up litter from the gutter and driving it about the town. Poor players, ensnared at the bottom of the sieve on Jones's lousy mattresses. Their virtue was sapped and people had had enough of them. They were chucked out through the back door like so many tea leaves.

There was nothing left for them then but to traipse to a row of empty cottages on the outskirts of town known as the College. There could not have been a more appropriate place for them to huddle together. On one side there was a visible reminder of the fifteenth century where Hergest Court still stood, with its orchard all around. On the other was an Elizabethan building, the old grammar school. And as it happens, there had been a connection between the cottages and these two a long time ago. Thus the shadow of the dead ages to which the players' talents belonged fell across their last lodging. By some instinct, perhaps, they had done everything according to pattern.

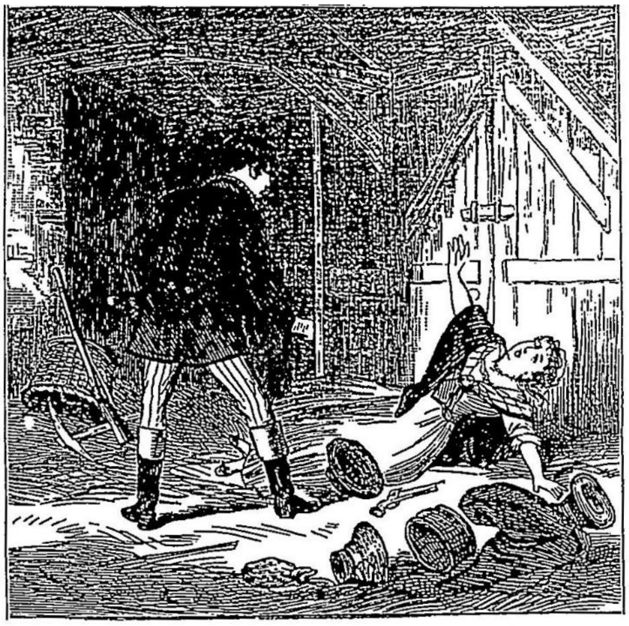
Mr Jones's beds were not unoccupied for long. Two strangers came to their historic sheets one night, unnoticed. But their luggage attracted everyone's attention. Station-waggons brought a number of long, coffin-shaped boxes up the street and placed them at the door of the Odd Fellows' Hall. At the time the Order was moribund among us. It used to flourish or decline with the fortunes of the foundry, the nail factory and the tannery. Only a few members paraded to church now beneath their banners and pennants on festival days, and their hall was unused, except for the indigenous needs of our little town.

In each of these boxes there was a murderer, or rather the waxen image of one. Charles Peace, Stinie Morrison, Dr Crippen, William Corder, and all the rest – they were carried in cold procession up the steps and placed in a careful row against the back wall of the hall. At the far end of the room a small stage was erected, like a doll's house, and in front of it were placed the chairs of the vanished Odd Fellows. Then a notice was nailed to the door: "Waxworks and Puppets. Admission one penny, seats threepence."

Puppets are in fashion again now, but in those days the word meant some old entertainment that your grandmother talked about. They were an amusement so old that they were once again completely new, and they received a warm welcome from the townsfolk. As was usual, the two men who worked the puppets stayed well beyond their schedule. But it was the first time ever that anyone had prospered by doing so, exchanging the austerity of Jones's beds for the comfy parlour of a respectable landlady. Every evening as the players came into town, walking down to their damp theatre in the field, a long queue of people would be waiting at the door of the Odd Fellows' Hall. Ours was a rainy town. Let that be our excuse for having anything to do with Charles Peace and his accomplices in their warm room, and succumbing to the magic of "the puppetry of idols" as denounced long ago by the Reverend Joseph Jenkins of Wrexham.

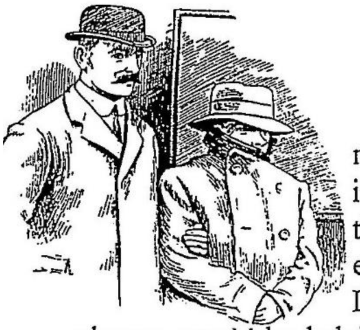


Charles Peace: The Master Criminal



From *Maria Marten; or The Red Barn*

That reverend gentleman has nothing to do with this story. More than a century and a half has gone by since he thundered against "the enjoyment of sin, laughter at ungodliness" which he saw in these performances. Yet, from a long way off, I must endorse his famous sermon with a faint amen. For I, too, found something evil in the antics of the little wooden men, but something fiendish that the preacher didn't notice. It's possible that I saw some of the plays that had tempted his flock, since some of them are traditional, like the History of Faustus and the Adventures of Tim Bobbin, and the old, cruel and violent tale on which Punch and Judy is based. Child's play, you say, that's what Punch and Judy is, and yet isn't the very fabric of the story rather odd? A man beats his wife to death, throws his child into a ditch and kills it, then cheats the gallows and hangs a policeman in his stead. A man with a face of a special kind which is an ancient symbol of carnal lust.



Dr Crippen and Inspector Dew

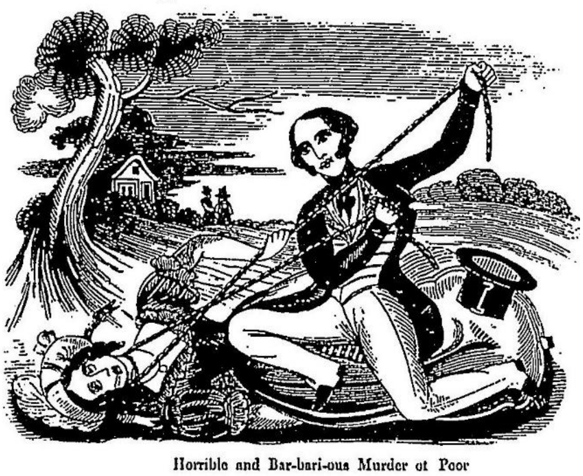
We didn't know much about such things in those days, but felt there was something evil mixed up in it all. Down in the field the players would be helping people to have fun and entertaining them. You would say of their most dire tragedy that it was "good." But here, in the presence of the little wooden images, there was only apprehension. There was no deep feeling, nor any genuine fun. There was something rather unpleasant in those puppets as they pranced through the most hilarious farce. Their laughter squeaked out of their stubborn inanimation with a noise as malevolent as a man's words coming out of a parrot's beak. It was inhuman. A painful travesty of the human condition. Laughter was here turned into jeering. A wire was pulled and a wooden lever raised to pour scorn on humankind.

But if the comedies were offensive, then the tragedies were almost unbearable. A disaster was a complete disaster, a villain a villain through and through. Here was conveyed, to perfection, the cruelty and evil and misfortune that the players in their tent had never been able to portray, though they constantly had experience of it. It may be that only the inhuman little puppets could sustain the chill of unmitigated evil. In them there was nothing of the breath that warms all clay and heals all villainy. Their power lay in the Frankenstein gait and baneful rigidity of the mask. Weren't the melodramas funny down there in the field? But up here Sweeney Todd would chill the marrow of your bones with his whispered longing: "Oh that the whole world was one smooth, white throat – and I to cut it!"

Perhaps the waxworks at the back of the hall had something to do with the ambience. There were about a score of them, all in a row, and each one taking up as much room as a man. But, as they stood there motionless, the air about them also grew stiff. There was always a tense silence at your back, a silence that invaded space and filled it. Your mind sensed it and would pause, just as your body grew instinctively aware of some material obstacle in the darkness, and stand stockstill. Forty unblinking eyes would be staring at you and at the pitiless scenes up on the little stage. I wonder whether the show men had any feeling for them as they manipulated their dolls and tried to please the dead masters of their craft. I wonder whether they were endeavouring to earn a spark of recognition from the hard knowing eyes in front of them: "Is this how you put her under the floorboards, Dr Crippen?... Is this how the poison was mixed, Mr Seddon?"

Did they know that the killers were still committing murder in their pale and bloodless immortality? For these phantoms were slowly smothering the players with the weight of unprofitable days. We were all assisting them to do just that. They took from me enough pennies to put on the closed eyes of all the players. That is how we repaid the debt for hours of fun and laughter, and for the enduring magic of their immortal lines. [....]

They left their playhouse for the wind and rain to finish off the performance. That is how we knew they had gone. One evening it wasn't lit up any more. The braziers weren't shining through the dark eye of the door. The place lay cold and silent and empty like a skull in the mud. Nobody came on to apologize for the unexpected mishap and recite immortal lines. The shreds of canvas fluttered overhead in the rain-filled wind like wordless tongues.



Horrible and Bar-bari-ous Murder of Poor
JAEL DENNY,
THE ILL-FATED VICTIM OF THOMAS DRORY.

The pictures on these pages are gratefully received from Jane Phillips and the Barry Clarke collection.

The following (slightly edited) piece originally appeared on the puptcrit site (3 1 00) as part of a discussion concerning puppets and religion and was specifically prompted by a description, on the same site, by Christopher Hudert of a Catholic Family Mass puppet performance he gave in the States. Bob Frith is Artistic Director of Horse & Bamboo. He has, incidentally, been awarded one of the UNIMA Festival Scholarships and has selected Charleville.

Church Puppets, or Who Put the Marie in Marionette

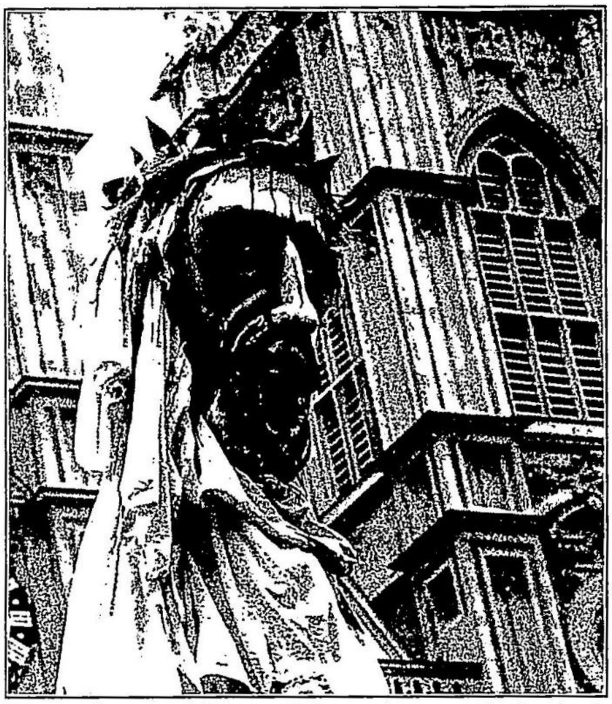
Bob Frith

I've directed several performances in churches and cathedrals – most recently in Westminster Abbey between 1996 and 1998. Hard to turn down the opportunity to use such a wonderful space, acoustic and history.

The Abbey chapter first approached me because one of the canons, visiting a friend in Kent, happened upon a Horse + Bamboo performance in a village hall. That show was about the Mexican illustrator, revolutionary, and drunkard JG Posada. With great foresight (I thought) the canon considered that masks, puppets, live music, and non-verbal theatre would translate well to the Abbey setting. This led to me devising two Good Friday "Events," working with the Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists to create a Procession, culminating in performances within the Abbey. After these I was invited to produce a full-scale show in place of a Sunday mass at the Abbey – I was given a free hand to create whatever I felt was appropriate.

The reaction in all cases was as Christopher [Hudert] describes. A deeply and profoundly involved "audience," beyond anything I've seen in a theatre. The experience was interesting for many reasons – but here it might be worth mentioning two of them.

Firstly, the difficulty I had in convincing the church authorities – especially the Methodists – that depicting Jesus as a "puppet" was not a sacrilege. Each of the three churches took a different line on this, and I was talking with representatives of Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, and Methodist Central Hall – not a small village congregation. The Anglicans were easy about it, but anxious not to offend or upset the other churches; the Catholics were worried on theological grounds (in particular that the puppeteer should be a male); the Methodists were pretty uncomfortable with "representation" at all, and dragged their heels about the whole idea. The meetings were quite animated, I remember getting angry on one or two occasions. The main problem, I believe, was having used the word "puppet" and then having to deal with its associations (problems familiar from the *Being John Malkovitch* post on puptcrit). I eventually got my way, and after the event was genuinely and warmly congratulated by everyone – including the Methodists. The "Jesus" puppet, by the way, was a 3-metre-high figure.



The other really striking memory was at the end of the first section – the Procession. The puppets were left in a tableau on the Abbey Green. As we (the puppeteers) moved back from the tableau and left the image for the crowd to absorb, the Jesus figure was slowly laid on the ground. Even before the puppeteer was able to extract himself from the puppet, members of the crowd began to weep and pray, touching the

Photo courtesy Horse and Bamboo Theatre

puppet, crossing themselves, fingering their rosaries. The puppet was lost in the midst of the crowd as people responded to it as an icon. A very strange and complex experience to observe. It made me wonder if the particular effectiveness of puppetry in church settings may be, in part, to do with the ability of the puppet-object to "carry" an iconic presence in a way that is almost impossible for an actor.

All puppeteers are familiar with this quality – it's just that in a religious, "transcendental," setting, the process becomes blindingly obvious.

Power to the Puppet

John Bell, writing to puptcrit, 19 April: "As puppeteer Erik Blanc commented to me today, this story of the puppets seized in Washington reinforces Bread and Puppet director Peter Schumann's comment in 'The Radicality of the Puppet Theater' that puppet theatre is 'by definition of its most persuasive characteristics, an anarchic art, subversive and untameable by nature, an art which is easier researched in police records than in theater chronicles.'

It's very interesting that the whole anti-IMF/World Bank movement has incorporated giant puppets quite prominently."

To give a little flavour, here is Don Ogden, puptcrit (15 April): "By mid-afternoon, a Free the Puppets' Brigade was dug in by the Old Convergence space demanding the liberation of any puppets being held hostage by the [Washington] DCPD and their minions.

Chants of 'Free the Puppets' filled the air at the corner of Florida & 13th as some sixty to eighty activists occupied the police line resulting from the morning's bogus raid on the old Convergence building. Beyond the line outside the Convergence space the A16 puppets remained under arrest as negotiations for their release were taken by various organizers. [....] Whistles, drums, chants and songs ebbed and flowed as the Free the Puppets Brigade grew in numbers. An anarchist contingent was onhand to keep the cops on edge." The site contains images, but *The Guardian* (12 April) also carried a Mark Wilson colour photograph captioned "Puppetmaster Preparing for 'Seattle II': Puppets being prepared for Global Justice in San Francisco for protests against the World Trade Organization during the World Bank and IMF half-yearly meeting in Washington at the weekend."

Indian Anecdote

Penny Francis

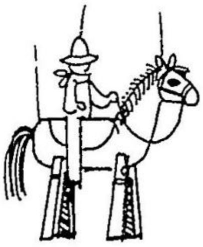
I thought it impossible for me to take a holiday without some sort of input by puppets to make it complete, but recently, travelling around a fair slice of India, I though it was going to be a first. Not a puppet in sight. A couple of days before returning home I found myself sheltering from the heat of Bombay in a village called Matheran, remarkable for its ban on any kind of motorized vehicle and for the fabulous views. The place consists of dozens of hotels and boarding houses where Indians come in their hundreds every weekend for the same reason that I was there, and there they walk or ride horses.

The main street is uncovered red earth, with a bazaar on each side and dozens of pedlars in the street offering you tempting bargains. From the throng a man approached me and offered a Rajasthani puppet show. I looked at him incredulously and he tried to explain to me – in almost nonexistent English – what he meant by a puppet show: "*Dolls,* madam" (or it might have been "*Dolls,* auntie"). He showed me a single demonstration marionette he was carrying on his shoulder and stated a price. He must have been a little surprised at my immediate acquiescence. I found it difficult to bargain over the cost of a show which involved the showman, the manipulator, and a drummer for which the charge was 500 rupees – about £8.50 at today's rate of exchange.

Finally he realized my expression, far from expressing hostility, was one of eagerness, and he asked me what my hotel was called. Slightly bewildered, I told him, and he said that he wasn't allowed in there. In fact the hotel was the last place I would have chosen to see the show: what an idea! After much effort and gesticulation I made him realize that I would much prefer somewhere in the street. Finally he found a shady pitch by the railway tracks. His stage consisted of two strings between two trees with material roughly draped over the string, to hide (almost) the puppeteer who worked both marionette and hand figures. As each item was announced by the showman the puppeteer could be seen extracting the next character from a cloth bag and hastily unravelling the strings.

Two red plastic chairs were royally set out for the patrons – me and my companion – and at first I thought the site just off the main thoroughfare would not draw the attention of the villagers, and we would see the show in solitary state. But the rhythm of the drums soon attracted a large crowd, which stood behind us at a polite distance until we beckoned them near. Even then only the children were bold enough to come alongside us. I think they loved it, and it must have been a rare treat for them – it certainly was if most people insist on seeing these shows behind hotel gates!

Of course I have seen these colourful little cloth puppets from Rajasthan before: they perform short dances, some tricks, and lively comedy sketches – there is a classic one with a horse, with the strings held in the fingers of the operator – there is no other control. This show was well done and we were well entertained; but for me, modern European that I am, the thrill lay in the unusual experience of meeting a genuinely itinerant puppeteer and watching his show in the open air with a local audience of all ages. It made my holiday.



Dance Dramas, Topeng, Gender Workshops, and Mask-Makers in Bali

Stephanie Green

Ubud is a good place to stay, away from the tourist hot-spots of Sanur and Kuta and on the outskirts of the urbanized sprawl of the south. However, it would be dishonest to pretend – with its internet cafés and touristy street bazaars – that it is untouched by tourism. Still, it is a useful base to explore the dance dramas on offer and is in reach of the *dalang* and mask and puppet makers. It is also the spot where Walter Spies settled in the twenties and encouraged local painters; and two very good museums – the Neka (the national art gallery, not the commercial one) and the Puri Lukisan – are worth a visit to get an idea of the best painters before you are tempted to buy any of the innumerable copies on sale in the bazaars.

The Ubud Tourist Information Centre is a good place to find out what's on, with a notice-board advertising daily performances and also a useful map of Ubud and district on sale. Be sure you have bought the right map, since there is also one which is purely a map without the border of useful notes such as quiet walks or bike rides in surrounding countryside and helpful hints on what not to do (eg walking on the precarious edges of paddy-field terraces and thereby destroying them), and most usefully for anyone wanting to study dance and/or *gender* (a metallophone with a two-octave or wider range, with bronze keys suspended over bamboo resonators, used to accompany *wayang kulit*) the names and addresses of tutors willing to give Westerners lessons.

Mr Wayan Loceng, of Sukawati, a charming septuagenarian, gives highly recommended *gender* workshops and he showed me his booking file with addresses from all over Europe and the USA. He also features on a CD "Music of Bali, Gamelan *Gender* Wayang" Br. Babakan Desa Sukawati, Rick's Record NPWP/TH 6.242.539.2-901/1999. I do not know whether it is available in the UK, but you can buy it in the large central CD and disc shop in Ubud. Mr Loceng is the third gentleman on the right on the CD's cover.

The masked dance dramas such as the Barong or Topeng Dances are of related interest to puppeteers, but it would be a pity to miss even the unmasked ones, which merit seeing for their own sake, particularly the Cak or Kecak (Monkey Dance), where the sound of "chak, chak" (supposedly the monkeys' chattering) is chanted to a syncopated rhythm by a massed male choir of singer/dancers with bare back and chests, clothed in sarongs made from the magical black and white checked cloth, the *poleng*, which is always performed at night around flaming torches, often in conjunction with the Sanghyang or Trance Dance, which is performed by prepubescent girls, usually aged eight, who are carried on in trance and, they say, have never been taught the dance but perform it perfectly. (I repeat here what everybody says, though experts say it is not true.) Magic and the belief in good and bad spirits are never very far away in Bali.

We saw the Legong (a lyrical female dance) and Joged (flirtation dance) in Tuban, near Kuta, and in Sanur witnessed the Ramayana "ballet," a shortened version of the Rama/Sita story revolving around the abduction of Sita by Rawana and her rescue with the aid of Hanuman, the Monkey General. This is a useful way of getting to grips with the best known of the Ramayana stories, which is also part of the *wayang kulit* repertoire. The Frog Dance is a modern dance specially devised for tourists but is highly enjoyable for children, with masked frogs and hopping to a jew's harp-type instrument.

These are highly polished performances in the major hotels and are much shortened (to approximately one hour) highlights for tourist consumption, which were highly enjoyable. Inevitably, they lack the atmosphere of village performances, but they are a good way of quickly getting a basic introduction to the repertoire, and in stunningly palatial surroundings graced by magnificent stone-carved statues of gods, goddesses, and demons. You do not have to be a resident, but, if you are on a budget, it is best to enquire whether dinner is necessary too. Otherwise, the ruined palace/temple in the centre of Ubud is an atmospheric setting to see the dance dramas.

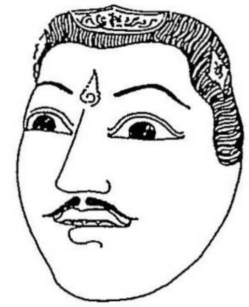
Topeng Masked Dance Dramas

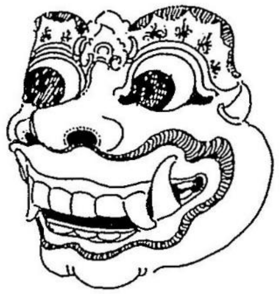
The acting skills necessary for mask performers became apparent when I met the superb Topeng mask dancer, the renowned Pak Kantor (Pak means father and is used like English Mr), whom I visited at the Sanggar Tari Bali Dance Foundation and at his home in Batuan-Pekandelan, Sukawati. I was introduced to him by Carmencita Palermo, who has been studying and training in Topeng Dance since 1994.

Although the septuagenarian Pak Kantor had little English and I have even less Bahasa Indonesia, we conversed with the aid of Carmencita as interpreter, and then Pak Kantor gave bravura miniature mime performances of various Topeng characters for me: the prime minister, Patih, who is stately and dignified; a comedy character, Monyer, a flirt who simpered and smirked, aided only by coy turns of the head, fluttering eye-lids and a handkerchief held to the face as prop; followed by a half-masked character, Bondres, or clown, a proud, self-important character; and an old man with crooked prominent teeth and bushy eye-brows wheezing and laughing. Full masks portray the "straight" high-born mimed characters while half-masks are used for the comic, speaking parts. The features of Balinese masks are fuller and the masks more rounded than Javanese ones.

Pak Kantor uses 75 masks. The old ones he has used in performance "have power" and are kept wrapped in white cloths. He only showed me modern ones, without power, since I was told it would take too long to perform all the prayers necessary to unwrap the old ones in the time I had available.

Later I met a skilled mask-maker, Ingoman Setiawan, who had an exhibition on in Tokyo. He told me it takes four-five days to carve a mask. He uses the traditional colours made out of ground pig bones and mineral pigments. These would take two weeks to paint and be 2-3 times more expensive than masks painted in acrylic. Anyone wishing to buy a mask could contact him at his home. Otherwise, you could contact Mr Kodi (in Br. Mukti Singapadu, Sukawati), who is another skilled mask-maker and dancer, or mask-maker I Nyoman Setiawan (in Lantanghidung, Batuan). Again, buying direct from a maker's home is a better way of ensuring quality than buying from street-traders.





I was highly privileged to be invited to attend a teeth-filing ceremony, which was to be followed by a Topeng performance, given by Pak Kantor and Carmencita Palermo. It was held in a remote village near Bangli, in the mountainous, cooler area north of Ubud. The village was completely untouched by tourism, and was reached by dirt tracks full of pot-holes, which the driver of our taxi was not too keen on, by a tortuous route, with no sign posting along the latter half.

We (my son and I) spent the day in the host family's "compound" home (a cluster of small *bale* or buildings around a central courtyard and all enclosed by a wall [in case of interest, compound is actually derived from Malay/Indonesian *kampung*, "village" – editor], arriving at 11.30am and being welcomed as part of the family along with the *gong* orchestra and other visitors to the communal meal for extended family and being allowed to observe the teeth-filing (a coming-of-age and purification ceremony). Incisors are filed as a symbol of distancing from one's baser nature, and without this repudiation, it is believed that one cannot enter heaven, since animals and demons have long teeth.

Usually teeth-filing takes place in conjunction with a wedding or cremation – since so many thousands of guests must be invited, it is an expensive affair, and so doubling up is advantageous. Ours was in conjunction with a *pitra yadnya*, which is held after a cremation and is a ceremony to call the spirits back. It meant that about 100 people from surrounding villages had their teeth filed too. The chanting in Kawi of the sacred texts was performed through a loudspeaker throughout the day by the *pemangku*, a lay priest.

After the ceremony, which took all day (with various processions up and down the village), the Topeng Dance was due to be performed. Normally, this would have begun in the afternoon, but the *pedanda*, the Brahman priest, was delayed, and they could not begin without him. Finally he arrived, about 5pm, and was ushered into the family temple (in their compound), and was not seen again!

However, the performance could now begin. It was in an improvised theatre opposite the compound next to the area where the teeth-filing had taken place. Palm matting had been placed on the ground and slung on poles from the roof but left open sided with a curtained proscenium arch one end, through which the dancers entered. The gamelan orchestra (known as the *gong*) sat on the matting at the other end, and the performance area was the space between the two. The audience was on the two sides of the performing area and mostly stood, whilst children sat on the ground in front. The whole area was festooned with strips of pale yellow dried palm leaf decorations hanging down in rows – the effect rather like Santa's grotto except of course that it was not tinsel!

Illustrations of masks from *Bala: Sekala & Niskala* by Fred B Eiseman Jr.

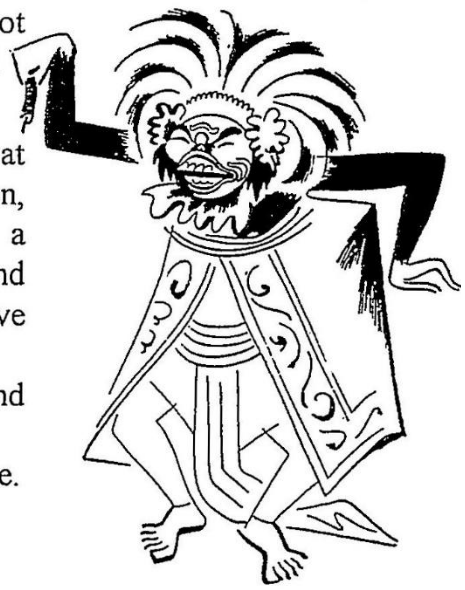
The *gong* became louder with dramatic synchronized chords from the entire orchestra, including drums, to announce that the dance was about to begin. Then the curtain, glittering with silvery thread, which hung from the arch was shaken several times. Finally, the minister appeared, his masked face white, denoting a high-born and noble character. This was performed by Carmencita, though she was so expert it was impossible to distinguish her from the Master, Pak Kantor. (There were in fact two performances, the first with Carmencita and Kantor connected to the ceremony, the second with more people, including Carmencita, to entertain.) The costume consisted of a rich red black and gold brocaded robe to just below the knees and a yoke-like collar which covered the shoulders and came down to below the chest. Brocaded calf-protectors were worn over white trousers, though part of the white cloth hung down between the legs and trailed on the ground so that the performer had to hold this up. Over all this a cape was worn which stuck out from the square shoulders because of the sword worn underneath. The intention was to make the dancer seem broad and thus give the character a more regal presence. The performance began with the dancer sitting down, with legs akimbo, feet pointed outwards. Hand gestures were formal, similar to the dance dramas we had seen, with arms outstretched, hands held upwards and fingers splayed as far back as they would go, separate groups of fingers wriggling, or the whole hand turning with thumb and fingers meeting in an amazing repertoire of gestures. The head movements were also stylized with sudden jerks from side to side, the eyes of the mask staring, giving an impression of the minister's power. Carmencita had explained to me earlier that breath control is essential to centre the dancer's energy, to give both physical and dramatic strength. Later, Carmencita, wearing a mask with long white hair, performed the role of an old man, the Topeng Tua. She explained to me subsequently that, though movements are stylized, there are semi-improvised elements, and she had created the incident where she stumbled and lunged towards some of the sitting children, who shrieked with gleeful mock fear. The trembling head, stops, and stumblings were a wonderful rendering of old age, and it was impressive to think that this was the same person who had recently performed the minister.

Pak Kantor and Carmencita alternated in the miming roles, but at one stage Pak Kantor wore a half-mask to perform a speaking role (also to music). It was amazing how the audience instantly started talking loudly over the performance so that even if you could understand you would not have been able to follow. I am sure that this was not a reflection on Pak Kantor's skills as an actor but on the rather long and boring content of historical narration. As soon as he returned to mime and dance the audience became attentive again!

This dance was Topeng Pajegan, which is often performed in conjunction with cremations and in which a single dancer/actor performs all the parts: the prince, a princess, an old man, the servant, the king, the king's minister, and the clown. However, on this occasion, Pak Kantor and Carmencita shared the roles. I only witnessed three since by that time it was 10pm. And for the sake of my son I decided to abandon the latter half of the performance, which would continue only after a long interlude. Carmencita later told me that she did not get home till 3pm!

Carmencita Palermo is at present in Leiden, Holland, on a research grant and is willing to give lectures, workshops, and performances throughout Europe.

You can



contact her c/o the BrUNIMA *Bulletin*. I should again like to thank Anna Ingleby and Carmencita Palermo for the advice and help they gave me, which made my stay in Bali so memorable and without which this article would have been impossible.

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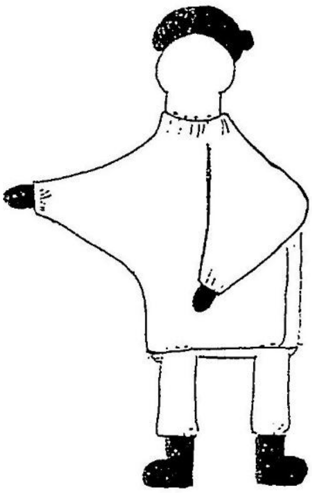
On the publication of *Performance in Java and Bali* in 1993, which contained papers delivered at a seminar of the same name held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in August 1990, I summarized the article by Victoria Clara van Groenendael called "*Po-té-hi*: the Chinese glove-puppet theatre in East Java." In this short study, which I would very much recommend, Van Groenendael writes: "During my research in Central Java, from 1976 to 1978 and again at the beginning of the 1980s, I never heard of a Chinese puppet show being performed, either in Surakarta or Yogyakarta, or in Semarang. According to Ki Bejo [puppeteer of Kediri], the reason for this must be sought in the aftermath of the attempted Communist coup of 30 September 1965, as this event led to rigid restrictions being laid on the freedom of movement of artists. Although these measures initially applied equally to both Javanese and Chinese artists, according to Ki Bejo, in the course of time, they were applied more leniently to the Javanese while for the Chinese it was still not so easy to perform. On top of this came the new measure, in 1967, that forbade the public display of Chinese culture so that it became even more difficult for Chinese artists such as puppeteers and musicians. Ki Bejo believed that these measures had led to the decline of Semarang as the Central Javanese centre for Chinese Culture, as many artists then moved to East Java, especially Surabaya, where the situation for Chinese artists was more favourable." This article by Ali Budiman from *The Jakarta Post* (9 4 00) recounts a revival of the form, sometimes also known as *wayang Cina*, in the post-Suharto era. If I may add a tangential personal note, I recently spoke with an academic friend just back from a conference on EU-Indonesia-East Timor relations held at Bogor (outside Jakarta) who told me how the event concluded with President Wahid (Gus Dur) inviting all the participants to dinner at the Bogor palace, during which reception he referred several time to his friend Xanana Gusmao (the East Timorese leader). For all the many current vicissitudes, a sea change.

Chinese Puppeteer Back on Stage after 32 Years

Semarang, Central Java – The new government's tolerance toward anything authentically Chinese after three decades of stamping it taboo, has not only made a political impact. For some people, it simply means they can return to their long-forbidden art. Thio Tiong Gie, a *dalang* (puppeteer) of the Chinese hand-puppet show or *wayang potehi*, is one of them. The 67-year-old who lives in Semarang could hardly believe at first that he was free to recite verses on the ancient Chinese kingdom or act out suspenseful war scenes using his puppets.

Thirty-three years ago when the New Order regime under president Soeharto came to power, *wayang potehi* shows were banned in Indonesia. He was at the time the chairman of the association of *wayang potehi* puppeteers. The sudden ban on the puppet performance was imposed at the same time the government began a long and senseless prohibition on the use of Chinese characters, names, and on Chinese-linked education, arts and sciences. The spirit of hate kindled by the New Order regime and excessive suspicion that communist causes could be inflamed within the Chinese community, led to the repression of the Chinese-Indonesian culture blanketed by the euphemism assimilation. For Thio, this simply meant that he must shelve the puppets. Forced to look for another job, the father of four sons and three daughters opened a welding workshop. But even after taking up a different profession and in shorter breath than 33 years ago, Thio's passion for puppetry remained intact.

While he is staging a performance, his sharp and concentrating gaze accompanies the stamping feet as he balances the movements of his fingers wrapped in the cloth of the *potehi* puppets. His normally husky voice is transformed into a sharp, strident and authoritatively heavy voice. In his hands the puppets are given souls. The dynamic movements come with expressive dialogs. During war scenes, the *potehi*



puppets turn upside down displaying Kung Fu martial art slashing swords and thrusting spears in all directions. Chinese *tambur* (drums), *gembreng* (gongs), *rebab* (two-stringed instruments), guitars and several musical instruments made of wood and bamboo, resound repeatedly, creating an atmosphere of ancient China. The mini stage, dominated by red, fleetingly resembles an altar. Banners are placed with Chinese characters containing words like wisdom on the supreme deity, the nation's prosperity and excerpts of verses taken from the related story.

The *wayang potehi* relates Chinese historical tales, such as Sie Jin Kui, a folk hero who fights tenaciously against tyranny and cowardice before finally ascending to the throne. The story develops extensively and continues on to Sie Teng San, the crown prince of the next generation. In the course of China's history of civilization, many philosophical teachings and schools of thought have experienced their ups and downs. Confucianism is one of the most influential teachings beside Taoism and Buddhism. The wisdom of K'ung Fu-tzu (Confucius)'s teachings is the dominant theme in the epic performances of *wayang potehi*. Confucius lived from 551 to 479 BC. Elementary school children learn it by rote, and its philosophical essence became a guidance of wisdom in life. Thio said *potehi* stories contain lessons of wisdom, filial respect, the battle of good versus bad and the principles of ancestral culture. "The New Order government that indiscriminately banned Chinese art in Indonesia like *wayang potehi* was deplorable and arbitrary," Thio said. "*Wayang potehi* was performed in a mix of Javanese and Indonesian. It is different from the *wayang potehi* in China's Hokkian dialect performed in Singapore.

Ethnic art should not be linked with politics. It has the potential to enrich the treasure that can be acculturated with our culture." The overblown mistrust toward anything of the Chinese culture was unfounded, he said. "We are born in Indonesia, we eat and drink and live our social life, and even die in the land. This is the land we love," he said. "It is only coincidental that we have a different ancestral culture with unique artforms like *wayang potehi*, an entertaining and equally enlightening show, " he said.

Discovery

Potehi is derived from the words *po*, meaning cloth, *te*, pocket, and *hi*, puppet. It literally means a puppet made of cloth. Thio Tiong Gie learned this in his early childhood, but only at 25 did he give his first performance in Cianjur, West Java. Thio is the oldest son of four brothers and four sisters. His parents were well-established cloth traders in Demak, Central Java. In 1942 during the Japanese occupation, the family was forced to flee to Semarang after the riots. They took with them practically nothing but the clothes they had on. On their way to Semarang, the group of refugees had to pass a damaged bridge. Among the refugees, his father, Thio Thian Soe, was the only one who volunteered to carry a woman with leprosy. As it turned out, the woman was a sister of a tobacco entrepreneur named Kho Pun Seng, who then gave the Thio family shelter and refuge. To survive, the family started trading in used commodities. Thio Tiong Gie finished elementary school that used Chinese as the language. He could not attend junior high school due to financial constraint. The junior high school's principal, Thio Pun Lip, sympathized with the young man's plight and gave him a Chinese dictionary. He told Thio to read the dictionary every day as a substitute for formal education. Toward mid-1955 the Thio family started selling *bakpao* (steamed buns). One day, Thio found among a pile of old magazines used as wrapping paper a well-worn book in Chinese titled *Sam Kok* (Three States). He was soon immersed in the book, drawing the attention of one of his customers. The man, Oei Seng Tui, turned

Undressed Chinese Glove figure from *Performance in Java and Bali* edited by Bernard Arps out to be in the *wayang potehi* business. He asked Thio to summarize the story he was reading. Oei wanted to know if Thio had really mastered Chinese. He then recommended Thio to be trained, assisting a puppeteer in a number of shows. It was not long before Thio Tiong Gie became a renowned puppeteer of *wayang potehi*. Thio married a girl from Muntilan, Central Java, who bore four boys and three girls. In 1986, his wife died.

Wayang potehi is now performed in Indonesian but the stories are still taken from books published in Hong Kong and China. The recitations are also still in the original Hokkian dialect. Thio's regular reading of newspapers has enriched his vocabulary of the Indonesian language. He speaks in a thick Javanese-ethnic Chinese accent. While still in good health Thio is determined to preserve the *wayang potehi* tradition. He is in negotiations with a number of temples to order a set of *wayang potehi* from Bandung. He is also exploring the possibility of establishing a training center for *wayang potehi* puppetry, especially for the younger generation. Thio also continues to perform in every city, charging about Rp 500,000 (about US$66) per night. The cost for making the stage, installing the sound system, transportation and accommodation are paid by the customer.

The Czech Lands

I was in the Czech and Slovak Republics for three weeks in August and September of last year. There is an argument for avoiding Prague in August – though my last two trips have in fact, for various reasons, included that month – because, not only will there be fewer tourists, but you will have greater choice, because most theatres, including puppet theatres like Spejbl and Hurvínek, which take a (Continental) summer break – roughly August to mid-September – will be open. However, I have always found it remarkably easy to escape the madding crowd.

Having written about the capital myself in previous *Bulletins* and Peter Charlton having covered a festival there in the last-but-one issue, I do not want to go too much over old ground here, so, suffice it to say that, while there are several worthwhile shows in town, Daniel Dvořák and Jan Marek's National Marionette Theatre version of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, with full panoply of baroque stage machinery and *trompe-l'oeil* effects, still remains *the* show to see, in my view.

Do visit the puppet theatre at 1 Žatecká, even if you do not have time for a show, to look at the *art nouveau*-style theatre (Remember that Alfons Mucha, despite the prevailing soft, French pronunciation of his name, was a Czech, and, moreover, a highly patriotic one. He now has his own museum in the Kaunický palác, in Panská, near Wenceslas Square.) and the small displays of Umělecká scéna historical theatre posters and puppets in the foyer. Umělecká scéna Říše loutek (Realm of Puppets Art Theatre) now shares the theatre in the Old Town Library, which it has occupied since 1928, with the National Marionette Theatre, whose long-running *Don Giovanni*, directed by Karel Brožek, using classical marionettes, is a production played very much for broad laughs, complete with drunken conductor and Penthouse maids (it is staged "with a certain measure of exaggeration and a quite clear intention to create a production intended particularly for foreign visitors to Prague" – I quote from an early review of it by Nina Malíková of Czech UNIMA). There is a very nicely produced and illustrated history entitled *Almanach Říše loutek 1920.......?* (published in 1996). It includes a complete list of the plays produced there, a list of members and collaborators, and a bibliography of material relating to the theatre. The theatre was founded in 1920 by the Suchardas – painter Anna Suchardová-

Brichová and sculptor Vojtěch Sucharda (whose non-theatre work included the architectural decoration of many buildings, including St Vitus Cathedral, and, most famously, the wooden apostles for the Old Town Clock). The work of Vojtěch Sucharda is discussed more accessibly (by virtue of being in English) in Alice Dubská's essay "The hegemony of the designer to cooperation in design," where she compares and contrasts the Realm of Puppets with another important company, Loutkové divadlo Umělecké výchovy (Artistic Education Puppet Theatre), which was founded in 1914. This appears in a splendid issue of the magazine *Czech Theatre* (No 13), which contains other highly interesting essays on Czech puppetry. (Incidentally, Klara Lichtagová, a member of Říše loutek, who is studying over here, attended Bristol's recent *PUPPETSLA*M!)

For understandable reasons, mainly to do with language, only a limited number of shows/events are made generally known to foreign visitors at information centres or through promotional leaflets distributed on the street. The UNIMA Centre is located at the Divadelní ůstav (Theatre Institute) at 17 Celetná, in the heart of town, but if you want information it is better to send a letter to Nina Malíková there in advance rather than just calling on spec, especially in August. Check out what is happening at Archa Theatre, which sometimes has puppetry on (Petr Nikl, for example) and boasts that it promoted improvisational Czech puppetry and street performances even before it opened its doors in 1994. It is located at Na Poříčí 26, Prague 1 (homepage at http://www.radio.cz/archa/). You will note how many addresses are in Prague 1.

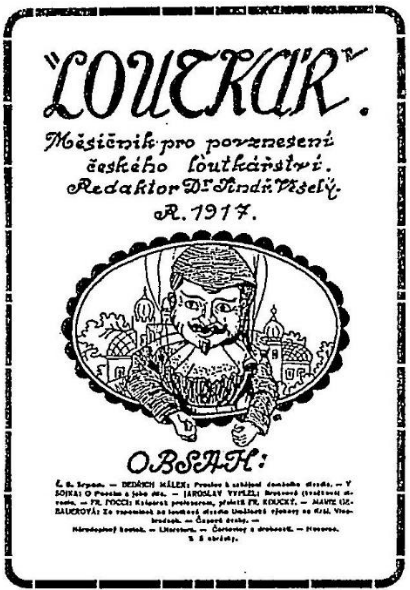
Falling into the tourist category, which is no necessary synonym for poor shows, is "black theatre," which has become very much associated with the country, even though the French, Georges Lafaye (born Bordeaux 1915) in particular, may be seen as its progenitors. (For a discussion of this see Ralph Kersten's *Schwarzes Theater*: "Whereas the French discovered this stage technique for the puppet theatre which contains great charm and subtle nuances of movement, the spread of black theatre itself has always been linked with the name of Prague" (p 31)). There are a good half-dozen "black theatre" shows in town: Jiří Srnec's Black Theatre (it has two troupes, one touring abroad, the other at home, but no permanent locale) and the Laterna Magika (Švankmajer, among others, collaborated there with director Alfred Radok during its heyday), now relocated to a swish, modern building next to the National Theatre, being just the best known.

There is, of course, much in addition to puppetry to enjoy in the capital, and I went to hear Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the wonderful, restored Stavovské divadlo (Theatre of the Estates), where, as Miloš Forman puts it in his memoir, *Turnaround*, "Don Giovanni had its premiere in 1787 and which we almost set on fire in 1982" while shooting an excerpt from it for *Amadeus*. The production has a British component in that it was originally conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras and is designed by Southampton-born Tazeena Firth, while the director is Prague-born David Radok, who studied English in Cambridge and is the son of Alfred Radok, the theatre and film director (who left with his family for Sweden after the invasion). Incidentally, Miloš Forman's twin sons, Petr and Matěj, from his marriage to the actress Věra Křesadlová, keep his own artistic (puppetry) line going in the shape of the Forman Brothers Theatre, which in September was collaborating with the Théâtre National de Bretagne in Pilsen to produce a hot-ticket number called *La Baraque/Bouda*, which billed "wine, music, and soup," for which I failed to get a ticket.

There is an interesting establishment at 12 Karlova (spitting distance from Charles Bridge), which houses the International Institute of Marionette Art (a school for puppeteers) and a puppet theatre and museum. This is the brainchild of Todor Ristić, an enterprising Serb who arrived in Prague some 15 years ago to study puppetry at DAMU (the Academy of Performing Arts) and stayed. He is, I know, regarded as a controversial figure within Czech UNIMA. However, I found him a welcoming host as I talked with him and Russian puppeteers, whom he had originally invited for the International Festival of the Art of Puppetry for Children (see Peter Charlton's review in *Bulletin* No 102), in the Greek restaurant in the basement of the building (the chef is actually Bulgarian, maintaining the Slav connection, and the food is good). I saw one of the shows on offer, *Don Quijote*, and enjoyed it, although it did still have some rough edges, that time would, no doubt, smooth out. It was about to go on foreign tour. Incidentally, the price of a ticket there – which also gets you into the museum – is extremely reasonable. (Some, but not all, venues with a tourist orientation "self-select" their audience through the pocket – the ticket price may seem reasonable to us, *and it is*, but on a Czech wage....)

The collection of traditional Czech puppets, which is to be found on the first floor of the Academy, is valuable in both the financial, but – much more importantly – aesthetic sense of the term. The names of most of the carvers will mean nothing to most people, but do go and see them: Antonín Münzberg , Josef Skupa, Mikoláš Sichrovský (Sychrovský), Josef Chochol, Augustin Jeřábek, Jan Temnička Junior, Antonín Sucharda Senior (1812-?), Antonín Sucharda Jnr (1843-1911) (respectively the grandfather and father of Vojtěch Sucharda, though his great grandfather Jan was a wood-carver too and may well have made puppets), Vojtěch Šedivý....

The national museums do, of course, have excellent collections. The National Museum, Prague, has 4,000 puppets and many other related items, and the Moravian Museum Department of Theatre History in Brno (contact Jaroslav Blecha), perhaps 3,000, but the drawback is that often none of them are to be seen. The last opportunity to see the Prague collection in the National Museum was the extensive "Czech Puppets" exhibition held in 1997 (previously shown at the Fondation Neumann Gallery in Gingings, Switzerland, to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the birth of Dr Erik Kolár, the Czech puppetry theorist). Lack of display space is, we all know, a universal problem for museums, and, to be fair to the National Museum, whose Theatre Department, and Jindra Patková, in particular, was very welcoming and helpful, it did host in the Spring of 1999 "Fred Schneckenburger's Puppet Cabaret," a collection of surrealistic puppets from the Bellerive Museum, Zurich.


"LOUTKÁŘ".

Měsíčník pro povznesení českého loutkářství.
Redaktor Dr. Jindř. Veselý.
R. 1917.

OBSAH:

Cover from 1917 *Loutkář*

The National Museum's puppets, by the way, are kept in a depository at Terezín (Theresienstadt), a small fortress town 35 miles north of the capital which Joseph II had built and named after his mother. It was turned into a ghetto/concentration camp during the war, but – despite everything – creativity in the arts flourished there. Terezín was itself the site of a piece of "theatre" in 1944 when the Nazis successfully transformed it into a "model" camp to dupe Red Cross representatives. Erik Kolár (1906-1976) was himself a prisoner there. A lawyer by training of Jewish origin, he became a teacher of Jewish children during the war before being deported to Terezín. "His puppets accompanied him and helped numerous children to endure the worst," as Jiří Středa writes in the catalogue of the "Marionnettes du Musée National, Prague" exhibition in Gingins, where he was to spend his last years. On returning from the camp to Prague after the war Kolár abandoned his legal career and concentrated on artistic activities. He was, among other things, to become the cofounder of the puppetry chair at DAMU, of which he was in charge for nine years and where he taught directing and dramaturgy. He was forced to leave the country in the seventies. March this year saw the announcement of the opening of a new permanent exhibition "Theatre in Terezín 1941-45" in former barracks at Terezín. (In an *antikvariát* (second-hand bookshop) I came across *Theater-Divadlo*, a book, published in 1965, of reminiscences of theatre people, including puppeteers, of the German occupation and WWII: it contains 132 illustrations of creative activity during that period, including examples from concentration camps. Even if you have no Czech it is worth visiting one or two of the numerous *antikvariáty*, as they usually also sell prints and other illustrated material plus books in foreign languages.)

To see museums' reserve collections prior arrangements must, of course, be made. For information on the carvers mentioned above and others see "The Marionette Proud and Dignified" by the wide-ranging artist and collector Milan Knížák in the magazine *Theatre Czech and Slovak*, 3/92, where he develops ideas originally formulated in *Mime Journal* No 6 (1978), Wisconsin, USA, which was entirely given over to his essay "Traditional Czech Marionette Theatre," published under the transparent pseudonym of Matěj Kašpar.

Towards the end of my stay the Old Town Hall hosted a fascinating exhibition on Count František Antonín Špork, an important patron of the arts in the Czech Lands during the baroque period (hence the profusion of *memento mori* skulls and skeletons in the commissioned imagery). It included quite a number of posters from his private theatre, established in Prague's New Town at the very beginning of the 18th century, which included German and Italian puppets shows – Hans Wurst, Faust, Pulcinella.... (You have to wait until the seventies for the first Czech puppeteers and 1782 for the first play in Czech – *Don Juan*. Alice Dubská's *Czech Puppet Theatre Over the Centuries* is the best (short) up-to-date history of Czech puppetry.) Unfortunately, there is no reference to this at all in either the attractive little catalogue or the video showing at the exhibition, which is a missed opportunity, because, while the puppetry at the Špork theatre is no new discovery, there has recently been, it was confirmed to me at the National Museum, a resurgence of interest in and research on this aristocrat's theatre. Jaroslav Bartoš, for example, refers to the Špork Theatre posters (on page 18 of his *Loutkářská kronika* (Puppeteer's Chronicle), published 1963) and gives a brief description of *Hercules and Alceste*, which was "probably" performed by Antoni Josef Geissler, at the theatre on 19 April 1713. The puppets were 120 cm high, and the play would have up to six dances or ballets. (A demotic version of this classical story still figures in Anton Anderle's repertoire in Slovakia today.)

The Goethe Institute, Prague, presented *Faust-Metamophoses* – one of the many events celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of its patron. It was a Czech-German venture: the puppets were designed by Michala Bartonová and made by her husband, the carver Antonín Mueller (Prague's Tineola Puppet Theatre), while the German puppeteers Silke Technau, Ralfe Lueke, and Stefan Schlafke (Berlin's Kobalt Marionette Theatre) worked with the Czechs on the text and the manipulation. During the performance the puppeteers spoke their native language, with a deliberate Babelian mixture at times. The main images and figures, given a Boschian visual twist, were drawn from the first and fourth parts of Faust. This was a one-night-only presentation (28 8 99), but *Faust* was to be presented again, in March this year, in the Praga mystica section of the Prague 2000

Festival, with another of the companies' joint ventures on view later on in the year.

While in Prague I was informed that Jan Švankmajer's current film, *Otesánek*, would be premiered – probably at a festival – in the first half of this year. A 73-page screenplay was prepared back in 1996, but, leaving aside the question of raising finance for a nonmainstream product, both working with children, which he is in this case (his previous feature involving a child, his version of Lewis Carroll's Alice, was truly fantastic), and pixellation are very time consuming. (My latest news of the film – mid-March – from a friend at the Czech Film Archives who has seen a rough cut is that "*Otesánek* is not finished, but it is going to be something extraordinary. He has left out all that he knows! I love it because now there are no tricks and funny pixellation, no decorative surrealism for everyone. Švankmajer has abandoned all the techniques which he knows so well – the animation of clay, dolls, marionettes, absurd combination of strange objects, bleeding laces etc. I do like that kind of imagination in his older films, but I like it even more if someone is able to abandon what he can do and knows in the name of something unknown. Especially if that someone is in his mid-sixties. It is more live acting – but so subversive! So far it is very close to the script but less funny. I laughed when reading the script, but the movie is more chilling.") A touring exhibition of the work of Jan and Eva Švankmajer, which for some reason bypassed Prague, was showing in Český Krumlov in September. (Švankmajer, by the way figured in "Fantastic Realism: the Other Face of Czech Cinema" at a long-weekend festival at London's Riverside Studios in December, where his work was discussed by a panel comprising Peter Hames, Michael O'Pray, and Dalibor Veselý – a member of the Czech surrealist movement. Peter Hames contributed an article "on the rediscovered wonderland of Czech surrealism" to *The Guardian* (03 12 99). Flicks books will be bringing out an updated version of Hames's study of the Czech new wave this August. A comprehensive website on Švankmajer (books, exhibitions, catalogues, interviews, and so forth) is to be found at http://www.illumin.co.uk/svank/ In addition to keeping an eye on the Riverside programme, Bohemophiles should get on the mailing list of the Czech Centre, London W1N 5RA.)

The Chrudim Puppet Museum, an attractive building in an attractive little Bohemian town about 100 km east of the capital, which has long organized an annual summer festival of amateur puppetry, should be on your itinerary. While discrete displays of traditional Czech puppet theatre (the Kopecký, Dubský, Kočka, Lašťovka... families, all the Suchardas – I check my enthusiasm because only so much Czech "alphabet soup" can be swallowed), wooden puppet theatres for children (commercially made but of remarkably high quality), foreign puppets in the collection (including a Fred Tickner Punch); and Luminiscenční divadlo (Luminescent Theatre, founded in 1958 in which puppets and props are coated with special paint illuminated by ultraviolet light) are permanent exhibits, the themes of other rooms vary. I, for example, saw exhibitions devoted to designer Petr Matásek , principal designer at Drak since 1974; Radost, the theatre which began in Brno under Vladimír Matoušek in 1949; the carving of Tomáš Štolba and illustrations of Renata Štolbová. (Naivní divadlo Liberec (Naive Theatre) and woodcarver František Vítek have also had exhibitions there). The systematic rotation of exhibits is admirable. The museum shop has a good selection of puppetry items, including a video *Bezhlavý rytíř* (*The Headless Knight*) by the Naivní divadlo Liberec. This version of the stock tale, performed by traditional rod marionettes under the direction of Tomáš Dvořák, is worth obtaining. Reviewing the last UNIMA Congress and Festival, in Budapest (*Bulletin* No 92, July 1996), John Phillips wrote: "I did however very much enjoy the presentations of Naivní Divadlo from Liberec

in the Czech Republic. Although this company is well known for their work with live actors, both of their productions of 'Ali Baba' and 'The Headless Knight' were puppetry-only performances firmly rooted in tradition and very funny." The video is all in Czech, but I should be happy to supply a résumé on request. The version of the anonymous *The Headless Knight* printed in Jaroslav Bartoš's wonderful collection of Czech folk puppeteers' plays (*Komedie a hry českých lidových loutkářů*) has eight pages of text; the 56 plays printed occupy a total of 670 pages.

When at the Chrudim museum ask for curator Petr Tomášek (he speaks English). I met him when he was over here a few years ago, but missed him by a whisker when I was over there. You may wish to pop in to see Jiří Kadeřávek at the Chrudim Cultural Centre, of which he is head. Jiří came over to see the Belgian festival we hosted in London and Birmingham a couple of years ago (his English is limited.)

You can get a cheap, direct but very slow bus from Prague's Florenc Bus Station to Chrudim, but I would suggest you investigate an alternative route, perhaps via Hradec Králové, where you might be able to see a performance by Drak (see Stephanie Green's article in *Animations*, August-September 1999). An hour's bus ride from Florenc will also take you to Terezín.

Jiří Trnka's artistic brush is far broader than puppet films, but puppets did rightly occupy a significant place in the fine exhibition of his work organized by Vlastimil Tětiva in Hluboká nad Vltavou, southern Bohemia, which closed at the end of October.

The one thing you cannot complain about regarding Prague is a lack of excellent books. There are historical accounts, studies of the architecture, painting, and music, and even a useful book of town walks and an excellent restaurant and pub guide with lots of anecdotes. I should like to single out Peter Demetz's recent historical and cultural survey *Prague in Black and Gold.* Revisiting his native city after a 50-year absence, he regrets the tourist invasion ("in my youth even the Charles Bridge was virtually deserted") while acknowledging, as I did at the beginning, that "it is easy to avoid the international masses," but he has a more deep-seated reservation: "My friends in the West envy me my excursions to 'magic' or 'mysterious' Prague, and the worst thing is that these clichés about the city are already beginning to implant themselves in the minds of my Czech friends... I am waiting for someone, at long last, to start speaking of Prague as the city of analytic minds and rationalists." It is true that the aforementioned clichés of Prague are a distorting mirror, and Kafka and the Golem, in particular, have become marketing concepts. However, this does not mean that they have lost their validity, merely that a proper balance needs to be struck. Demetz's book and (notwithstanding the title) Angelo Maria Ripellino's *Magic Prague* (both currently available as paperbacks or remaindered hardbacks) give you the kind of background that helps redress the balance and corrects the admen's one-dimensional view of a multiform city.

The contents list and English summary of articles in *Loutkář* is now available on clicking the Union Flag on http://www.divadlo.cz/loutkar/

The Drama Review, Fall 1999, publishes the first-ever translation from Russian and Czech of Petr Bogatyrev's 1923 essay "Czech Puppet Theatre and Russian Folk Theatre." Bogatyrev was a member of the Moscow School and Prague Linguistic Circle. Some people are put off by words like structuralism and semiotics: do not be in Bogatyrev's case, he is not only an outstanding scholar (though this is a lesser work), but is accessible. The issue of the *TDR* is now out of print but is expected to be published as a book. Do obtain it.

Illustrations from early *Loutkář*

After reading Dan Bishop's piece below, I regret even more not having been able to get away to Liège for a few days to see our "twins" and friends, but am pleased at least that he as well as Catherine Haill, who also reports well of it, were able to join them.

Mr Punch & The Tringle Factor

Dan Bishop

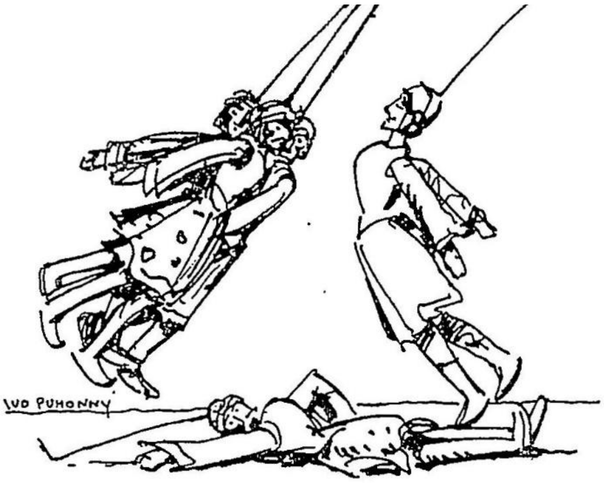
Liège is a convivial city – an architectural mixture of beautiful old buildings and some ghastly new ones, threaded through by the river Meuse, a rather murky waterway, to the bottom of which, apparently, have been consigned a large number of discarded motor cars, which now enjoy an indefinite and illegal repose.

Between the Musée d'Art Moderne and the area of Droixhe, the river briefly divides, creating an "island" district known locally as "La République Libre d'Outre-Meuse." In the centre of this part there is a statue – the Monument Tchantchès – which celebrates a famous son of Liège: the popular puppet hero Tchantchès, whose bravery and hard headed propensity for consuming the local fire water Peket is legend in the city.

It was this hospitable city of Liège that invited over 30 puppet companies from Belgium and beyond to participate in and share their puppet festival – "Le Printemps de la Marionnette" – in March this year.

The spectacular success of this festival must primarily be attributed to the vision, good nature and hard work of Georges Vetters (well known to BrUNIMA members) and also to Jean-Luc Bolly of the Service des Affaires Culturelles. The organization was always efficient, well delegated and amicable. Any operational problems arising were quickly resolved and the accommodation at the luxurious Holiday Inn, in the centre of the city, was very comfortable and convenient for reaching the various performance venues around Liège.

As a participant in the festival this account is both subjective and patchy, since it is never possible to get to all the shows one would wish to see, because of performance commitments. However, Georges' schedule was certainly easier than many, which enables me to give at least an impression of some of the programme.



The first show of the festival was a one-man shadow puppet version of *Peter & the Wolf* given by Figurentheater Heinrich Heimlich to an audience of small children. Heimlich's natural good humour and ability to reach out to and befriend his audience was established immediately as he played to us by way of introduction the motiv themes of Prokofiev's classic on an oboe and a clarinet. Then, through the simple medium of overhead projection, he illustrated a recording of the piece with a series of delightfully designed and manipulated shadow puppets. His obvious delight in "pom-poming" his way through the musical climax of the piece as he manipulated the puppets brought a broad smile to my face (and, I noticed in the darkness, also to that of Monsieur le Directeur de Festival Georges Vetters as the festival got under way). Enchanting.

Later that day I saw a performance at the Musée Tchantchès, a puppet theatre situated in the heart of Outre-Meuse and the most famous of the many theatres which feature the local hero. Théâtre Royal Ancien Impérial, the resident troupe, performed *The Saga of Saint Lambert* (the local patron saint). Unfortunately, my French is not good, let alone my Walloon dialect, but this show was clearly good fun, as was another such adventure, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, which we saw a few days later at the Théâtre Al Botroûle. In performances of plays featuring Tchantchès, the audience is always eager to offer quips and suggestions to the hero, who obligingly responds with comic bravado. There is usually much punning, use of anachronism and absurd comic situations involving Tchantchès' brave exploits as he appears in stories of the age of Charlemagne (another locally born hero), tales of saintly martyrdom and so on.

One of the many high points for me was *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* given by Naivní divadlo Liberec from the Czech Republic. All in Czech (with French summaries every now and then), this was, nevertheless, a very bright, funny and visually stunning version of the story with a wonderful "running gag," namely two massive panels which regularly swung round to face the audience and reveal a forty-strong men's choir whose beautifully carved faces had articulated jaws which dropped open in synchronization with the singing and even featured bass, baritone and tenor sections singing at different times, which added to the comic effect.

Something completely different – and for me an absolute gem – was Il Teatro del Drago – the Monticelli family – from Ravenna, Italy, with *The Abduction of Prince Charles*, featuring Fagiolino. Here was very fast slapstick, with no concession to the French (let alone the English) language at all. However, in this case I suspect the importance of the rhythm of the Italian language in its dramatic context made translation an impossibility. At any rate, for me the pace and skill of the slapstick was enough – though I did hear murmurs of dissent.

Finally, I was very happy to have seen the beautiful *The Fable of the Vixen* (*La Fábula de la Raposa*) performed by the Spanish company Los Titiriteros de Binéfar. Here, language was no bar at all. At first I thought this story of a fox, a rat and a farmer was going to be a bit sentimental, but I was wrong. It's a deceptively simple tale told with a big heart and great manipulative skill. Georges said to me that the first time he saw it, he cried. So did I. Very special.

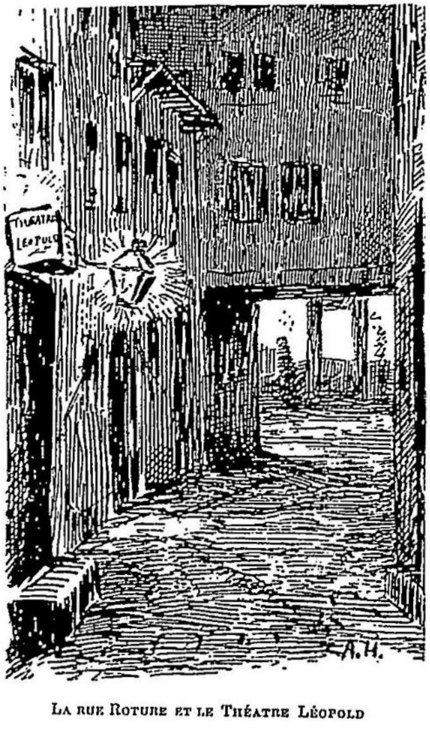
I was unable to see Le Théâtre Pas Sage (once again) because our show times clashed. The same applied to Daniel Raffel's unique Cinémarionnette and to Gui Baldet's *Guignol* though, fortunately, I have seen both these excellent shows before.

Of the six performances I gave, the venue of the first was notable in that it was outside the town, in a village, at Au Théâtre de la Cave – a very small theatre in a private house which reverts to being a garage in the week! The final show was especially enjoyable for me as it was in the Musée Tchantchès before a very enthusiastic Sunday morning audience. It was a lovely way to finish,

"Le Printemps de la Marionnette" featured a broad variety of work, the standards of shows were high and they were all *puppet* shows! It was a friendly festival, affording opportunities to eat with old friends, make new ones and sample wonderful food – both traditional (the *salade liégoise*, for example, which isn't salad at all but vegetables!) and exotic (such as the excellent Lebanese cuisine at "Raymondo's").

Also, it was striking how generously the Province de Liège welcomed its visitors both with an opening gala reception attended by hundreds of people and hosted by town dignitaries, and a reception at the Governor's Palace.

After a magical 10 days it was, sadly, time for us to drive away – but we'll be back.



La rue Roture et le Théâtre Léopold

In the last issue your editor, in a report on Slovakia, referred to the use of the *pivetta*/swazzle, with which Glyn Edwards takes issue – most informatively – in the following letter.

The meaning of terms, particularly foreign ones, and the reliability of sources – in the widest sense – is fraught with difficulty. *Pivetta* is a diminutive of *piva* (cp pipe, fife), a "bagpipe," a reed-pipe instrument. The Italian instrument does indeed sound very reedy. The Sansoni-Harrap Standard Italian and English Dictionary gives *pivetta* as "reed," though a reverse search under "reed" yields only *linguetta* and *ancia*. Nevertheless, this seemed to make (common)sense. I tested this hypothesis out on Daniela Paolucci (author of *Pulcinella e Punch: Due Tradizione a Confronto*, which, it is hoped, will one day soon be translated into English, preferably by Daniela) at the Millennium Punch and Judy Jamboree in the Midlands. She did not think it meant reed and went off to ask Aldo De Martino, the Pulcinella player, who agreed with her: *Pivetta* meant just a swazzle (it is also a not uncommon proper name, as any Internet search will show). Back to the dictionaries: The Cambridge Italian Dictionary gave *pivetta* as (musical) "reed," while a reverse search, this time, yielded *ancia, linguetta, pivetta.*

I had the pleasure of attending Glyn's swazzle workshop at the aforementioned festival. Given my name, you might have expected me to be the "Papageno" of the assembly, but I was greatly outswazzled by the Hungarian participants. They informed me that there is a Hungarian term for swazzle, namely *nyelvsip*, which I was told means (only) swazzle and is analyzable as *nyelv/sip* (tongue/whistle). The Concise Hungarian-Oxford Dictionary, consulted later, indicated that *sip* could also mean "(shepherd's) pipe, reed." The swazzle is not used in Hungary, but the existence of the monovalent term indicates that it may once have been. It could be that the larger amount of talk in Vitéz Lázsló, as compared, say, with P&J, may have militated against its use. By the way, the Russian word for swazzle, *pishchik*, can also mean a musical reed.

So, does *pivetta* mean musical reed as well as swazzle or not?

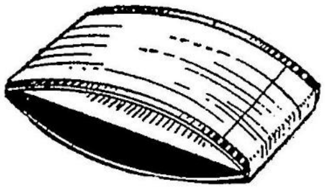
A title for the piece below which appealed was "Oggigiorno l'uso della pivetta è proprio un segreto di Pulcinella" ("Today the use of the *pivetta* is truly a secret of Pulcinella," ie an *open secret*), a pun which works in French and Russian as well as Italian, but not, alas, in English. In case it should be a secret to any readers, titles are often supplied by the (sub)editor, though your editor cannot lay claim to Punchman Dan Bishop's play on words in this issue.

Pivetta versus the Swazzle Is a Swizz

Dear Editor,

I have just come back from teaching the swazzle and general street puppetry skills at Bruno Leone's *Scuola di Guarattelle* course in Naples, in which a number of young Neapolitans plus some French students, nominated by Roman Paska at Charleville-Mézières, came to terms for two months with Pulcinella and his kindred. I should thus like to comment on the *pivetta*/swazzle issue raised in the previous *Bulletin* as I had ample opportunity to discuss it both with Bruno himself and with Salvatore Gatto, who was a regular visitor to mentor the students.

I asked them if they considered the swazzle and *pivetta* to be different instruments with different techniques, and they confirmed my own previous understanding that they are identical. (I have also seen a Russian *pishchik*, on a previous overseas trip, and saw no difference there either). I suspect that if Bruno had felt them to be fundamentally different he would have asked an Italian puppeteer rather than me to run that part of the course. It is true, however, that different performers in both the Italian and English traditions find their own technique for manipulating the swazzle/*pivetta* in the mouth and producing its distinctive tones. This is due to the fact that the precise contours of the inside of the mouth vary from individual to individual – with the key factor often being the precise curve of the roof of the mouth near the soft palate. What determines the effectiveness of the swazzle/*pivetta* is the extent to which the performer can get it back in the mouth. The farther back the better as this gives far greater control over shaping the sounds before they leave the lips. Swazzles/*pivettas* held just behind the teeth produce a far more limited range of sounds. Those who hold it between the lips (as some performers do, and is traditional in the related Rajasthani technique) are unable to articulate words at all and use the device more in the style of a kazoo in order to produce a range of notes.



There are also two different schools of swazzle/*pivetta* usage. One technique keeps the device permanently wedged in place across the roof of the mouth and thus ready at a moment's notice; the other keeps the device parked in the cheeks (where children keep their chewing gum should they wish to open their mouth to prove they have none!) and uses the tongue to flick it into place when required. Skilled exponents of either technique can manage rapid-fire exchanges of dialogue with no problem. As Pulcinella speaks Neapolitan dialect and I don't even speak Italian I asked Bruno to what extent Pulcinella's dialogue was comprehensible to his audience. He told me that "Pullishineh" (as the name is pronounced in dialect) is understood up to a point and that – rather like Mr Punch – the words are understood within the general context of the scenario and the responses of the other characters. Bruno also told me that, in his opinion, about fifteen Italian puppeteers currently used the *pivetta* and he was proud that we doubled this total during the course. He himself had prised the secret from Nunzio Zampella – the last street performer in Naples in the late 1970s – who had inspired Bruno single-handedly to rescue the tradition. Zampella – like many old-time showmen – guarded the secrets of his trade closely. He told Bruno that he should be jealous about sharing the swazzle "as you are jealous of your woman." He offered to sell Bruno a swazzle for a million lire provided he could already use it! Bruno circumvented this by making his own attempt at a *pivetta*, after which Zampella relented. Bruno then lost Zampella's friendship for a year by introducing the *pivetta* to others, until winning Zampella round to the current point of view that teaching the "secret" is but giving tongue to fresh Pulcinellas to be released into the world. Amongst those to whom Bruno introduced the *pivetta* were Salvatore Gatto and Paolo Commentale, so its current usage is of relatively recent origin.

Having heard Bruno, Paolo and Salvatore using their *pivettas* I can confirm that they are indeed virtuosi in their use of the instrument to generate a rhythm for the show. However, neither more nor less than many of the top swazzle-users, who have understood that Punch, too, is a show in which the rhythms of the swazzle are a key element – whether they be in the style of Pulcinella or (quite often) of Frankie Howard. An additional subjective element comes into play here, too, comparable to the argument as to whether Italian opera is "more musical" than German or English opera by reason of the cadences of the very language.

In their book *Popular Puppet Theatre in Europe, 1800-1914* John McCormick and Bennie Pratasik also claim that "the swazzle has been in decline since electrical sound amplification became general, or else it has deteriorated into little more than a series of squeaks." They contrast this with the art of the swazzle (sic) which "has been most carefully nurtured and maintained in Italy by such practitioners as Paolo Commentale, Bruno Leone and Salvatore Gatto." This is stated as fact when it is both anecdotal and wrong. On the whole, Punch "Profs" set great store by the use of the swazzle amongst their number and take as kindly to ill-informed comments in print suggesting otherwise as would Mr Punch himself.

Swazzling regards,
Glyn Edwards

A number of well-argued talks on Punch were delivered at the Midlands Punch Jamboree (which will be written up in the next issue). They can be accessed at the excellent www.punchandjudy.com

The much-enjoyed post-festival social event included a drinking song with the following chorus:

Mr Punch, Mr Punch still going strong.
Part of our history for ever so long.
Here we are gathered good friends and true,
So fill up your glasses, Mr Punch here's to you.

Swazzle illustration from *How to do Punch & Judy* by Sydney De Hempsey

Puppet Carving in Bruges March 2000

Ted Beresford

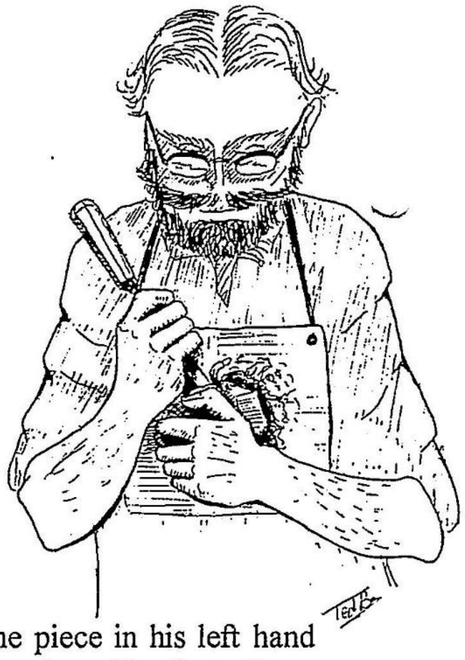
Once again we consolidated our connection with Bruges. Many other Belgian towns have strong puppet traditions but nothing much in Bruges, so it gives us great satisfaction to know that we have probably started one, and an odd one at that.

It started over five years ago when Kath, my wife, and I were asked to go over and run a full week's course on the making of British-style puppets. This we did and we were asked back the following year when they not only made but also performed with their marionettes. The course was continued for a further two years by our Belgian friends, Chris and Mieke Geris, who brought their own great skills to Bruges. This year the organisers, Marc Beuton and Marten Lierman, decided to ask Michala Bartonová (artist/designer) and her husband, Antonín Mueller (carver), of the Czech Republic to continue it.

When we first met, Marc was already a puppeteer, using mainly glove puppets; Marten had made puppets, but had never performed. Now they often perform together – mainly street theatre. Marten performed at the Sutton festival last year (and has been asked again this), while Marc was last year's choice for the Guildhall show. They will also be working, later, at the Dome, using puppets which are a wonderful combination of my stringing and construction, a combination of Belgian and Czech woodcarving, and their own design and individuality!

Now back to this year. I have always admired the style of carving that shows the marks of the gouge and facets on the finished object ever since my father brought back some simple Austrian figures just after the Second World War. At Bruges this year I went as a student (well I've only been carving for 50 years and, unlike some people, don't know it all!).

Michala is the designer: she is a fan of Hieronymous Bosch, and it shows in her work [see also *The Czech Lands*]. We were offered a choice of six designs. Our wood (lime) was roughly band-sawed in both profiles to save time but still allowing plenty of scope for individuality. Of the ten in the class I was one of the six who chose the Faust-like figure; the others choosing fat cooks and Goblin-like characters. Michala likes to design her faces asymmetrically so that they appear to change expression as they turn.

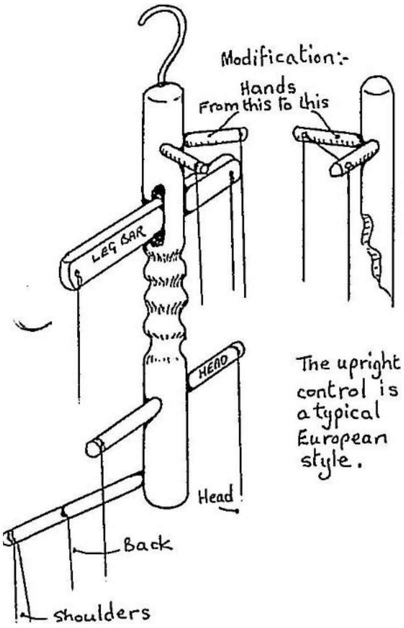


Antonín is the woodcarver. There are two main aspects to his approach: he uses neither vice nor sandpaper! The first stems from the lack of equipment in the then-Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia. Instead he has a small leather protective "apron" on his chest, holds the piece in his left hand and carves towards the chest (the first of two layers of thick cow-hide already had a 4"-diameter hole through it!). The gouge is held like a downward striking dagger but by the blade, close to the "sharp end." The advantage of this is that the workpiece can be turned quickly to the best cutting angle and there is a greater feeling of being at one with the object.

As no sandpaper is used at all, tools must be in peak condition: razor sharp, correct angle, and mirror polish – all essential for good work, anyway. Knowing that rasping and sanding are not allowed, focuses the mind on the quality of the carving.

Once the carving is finished with no loose fibres and clean, sharp edges and facets, it is ready for the finish. The base layer is a turps /beeswax mix which is allowed to dry before colouring. Oil colours are used straight from the tube and applied very thinly by brush, cloth or finger. Little or no thinning (with turps) of the paint, which must remain translucent to allow the texture and colour of the wood to show through.

The costume was partly carved, partly fabric-dressed. The hat also was carved in with the head. Controls had been prepared for us and were of a typical East European upright pattern with a leg bar working in a slot. It was, of course, a standard "actor" control. The only alteration I have made is to change the individual hand strings, fixed to two protruding "horns," to a "run through," thus enabling control of both hands from one string.



The result was a very pleasing little puppet of about 50 cms, as against my own marionettes, which are about 60 cms. As the style is so different to my other figures, it will probably be used only in demonstrations. However, there is no doubt about the influence that the week will have on my future way of working. I am not sure about the oil paint, though; I think I will stick to acrylic, but well watered down so that, like the oil method above, the wood texture is still visible.

Anyone coming to my woodcarving weekend (13-15 October) will be shown the method, although vices will be provided for the Traditionalists! The theme will be "A Devilishly Good Weekend." The choice will be a punch head or devil as glove (one- or two-fingered neck), marionette or marotte.

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Sketches by Ted Beresford

Handspring are quite frequent visitors to this part of the world, their Faust and Ubu being the two most recent plays toured, though this latest one of theirs, *The Chimp Project*, has no William Kentridge connection. ("Profil: William Kentridge" was broadcast on the Franco-German Arte channel, available here too, 16 February. The makers of it concentrated on Kentridge the creator of animated shorts, leaving aside the man of the theatre and filmmaker. Watch out for a repeat.)

Coincidentally, when this article was received in early April the press was full of pieces summarizing material in the latest issue of the journal *Nature* on the social system of monkeys (see *The Independent*, 6 4 00, for an article on the cooperative behaviour of capuchin monkeys with a system of barter whereby they are paid in food in return for work (chimpanzees, man's closest living relative, are the only other primate to hunt in a similar way to capuchins) and a fascinating article in *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 4 00, on insights into the evolution of language in humans afforded by recent work in game theory, which also looks at the role of cooperation (syntax, often thought to be a hallmark of human intelligence, could have been evolved by other animals, and some – dolphins or chimps, say, – may even, unbeknown to us, have syntactic communication). My own memories of chimps and language go back to Washoe in the early seventies. Washoe (named after an Indian tribe in Nevada – the word means "people") was the first nonhuman said to have acquired a human language – American Sign Language. Readers of a philosophical disposition might like to ponder the following comment of Wittgenstein about world views, which I also encountered at that time: "If a lion could speak we would not be able to understand it."

The Chimp Project by Basil Jones (co-director with Adrian Kohler of Handspring Theatre of South Africa) Director's Note, 14 March 2000 [AK]

Scriptwriter, Peter Esterhuysen, and zoologist, Barak Morgan, first approached me with a proposal to create a play centred on chimpanzees early in 1998. For my part, I was immediately excited by the unique opportunity of representing these animals with puppets. When films are made using chimpanzee characters, they have to be trained and bribed into doing what the camera wants of them. With puppet chimpanzees we would be in complete

HANDSPRING

control. We began mining the rich literature around the subject from Jane Goodall's accounts of her early years at Gombe to Donna Haraway's searing insights produced in the course of her "undercover narrative" which revealed many of the unacknowledged agendas behind chimpanzee research.

We learnt about the captive chimps who had been taught to use sign language in the sixties and seventies. We also knew that startling discoveries had been made concerning the social nature of aggression and sexuality of chimpanzees, with strong resonances for human sociality. I became aware that many proposals, connections and valencies between the great apes and ourselves had been noted, but their implications for our understanding of what is "natural" had never been explored. Because we were working with puppets, we seemed to be in a unique position to play with some of the ideas emanating from the research.

We then organized a trip to the Gombe Stream National Park on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, where we spent ten days with the family of wild chimps that have been studied by Jane Goodall and her Institute since the early sixties. This was a vital experience for us. Finally we could witness chimp culture at first hand: their hunting, their forms of communication, and their tool use. We acknowledged and celebrated a culture centred on unique social rituals.

But what struck me was how artificial this wild sanctuary had become. There was something eerie in the way the chimps would walk right past us as if we were extras in a daily soap in which they were the nonchalant, full-time stars. Despite their wildness, these chimps had become totally habituated to human beings. Coupled to this the lush forests of Gombe rise in stark contrast to the barren areas outside its narrow borders. I asked myself what the status could be of this strange Eden, threatened on three sides by refugee settlers filtering down from Burundi and Ruanda and the Congo.

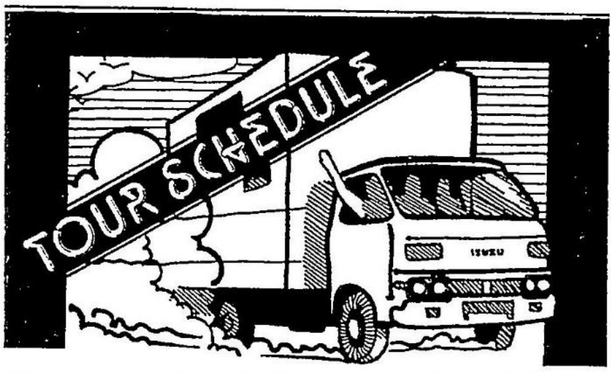
On our return, the play slowly began to evolve. We were aware that we'd be working against a backdrop of thousands of naturalistic documentaries and articles produced by *National Geographic* and others. And in a way, we made a deliberate attempt to deconstruct this naturalism. By bringing Lisa into the play as its central character, she herself confronts and contests what is natural. The same problem posed itself when the time came to design the puppets. How to represent these animals? We knew how important grooming was to the social life of chimpanzees and therefore hair seemed to be a prerequisite. However, an early hairy prototype proved lifeless and boring. Clearly less naturalism was called for and the lantern or ghostlike chimp puppets were the result.

Unwittingly these puppets serve to illustrate Freud's assertion that man is a "prosthetic god" – our mastery over an array of aids and implements giving us astonishing powers. Except the prosthesis that renders us godlike is neither a telescope nor a microscope, but rather a puppet. The mechanisms clenched in our fists extend our imaginative reach. The puppets ape our movements whilst we sweat and struggle to reproduce the movements of apes, projecting our own aspirations through the breath of our kin-animals, the chimps.

To represent by misrepresenting is part of this project. To problematize the idea of Nature and the natural. In focussing on an attempt to rehabilitate a domesticated animal, I'm not drawing on the Eden mythology of *Born Free*, the classic white middle-class romance about a "natural" world that we've become alienated from, but which actually never existed. Rather, what I have is this strange creature, Lisa, who has become the recipient of one of the touchstones of our humanity, our language. Is this an inevitable transference? Is evolutionary engineering in the new century as unstoppable as genetic engineering became late in our last century?

Ultimately we have been forced to confront the ancient and paradoxical dualism between culture and nature and to pose the question: does it exist?

The following information was subsequently obtained from Basil Jones:



The play premieres in Hannover, 9 June, during the period of the Hanover Expo. In the production's "opening beat" we will do a four-week tour in Germany. The production then returns to South Africa, where we will perform at the Standard Bank National Festival of the Arts in Grahamstown and at the Market Theatre. -
We return to Europe for a six-week tour beginning around 22 October in Paris. However, dates for this tour have not yet been finalized.

The She-Fox of Shinoda

The Hartland Chamber Opera group was formed to present the puppet opera *The She-Fox of Shinoda*, a joint venture with Saruhachi-za, a *Bunya* puppet troupe from Sado Island, Japan. The opera, music composed by Colin Hodgetts, will be presented in seven venues in the South West in November 2000. The production will go to Japan in November 2001.

Saruhachi-za came to the UK in 1998 with the Kodo drummers and performed on the South Bank and at the Edinburgh Festival. Takeshi Nishihashi, the troupe's director felt that they had not communicated with a Western audience as well as they might, and so the idea of a puppet opera, with words in English and Western music, was hatched.

The text for the play *Shinoda-zuma* (The She-Fox of Shinoda) belongs to the genre of *sekkyo-bushi* (lit. "sermon-ballad"), a very old form originating in the 9th or 10th centuries and first used with puppets in the 17th century. Historically, this makes it older than *joruri* ballads, on which *Bunraku* puppets are based. *Shinoda-zuma* is one of the "famous five" stories of this genre. Another is *Sansho-dayu*, made into a wonderful film by the director Kenji Mizoguchi.

Takeshi Nishihashi, the puppeteer, was born 1948. He undertook Theatre Studies at Waseda University. In 1970 he became a *Bunraku* puppeteer under Minosuke Yoshida, taking the stage name Minoshi Yoshida. He appeared regularly at Tokyo's National Theatre and Osaka's Asahi-za, as well as in regional cities all over Japan. He made two trips to Europe, touring from Sweden to Italy and appearing at the Edinburgh Festival. In 1979 he moved to Sado Island, where he became a member of the *Bunya* puppet troupe Osaki-za. They have appeared in Germany. In 1995 he set up his own troupe, Saruhachi-za. Its aims are to transmit the *Bunya* tradition, revive old works, and explore ways of widening the tradition in collaboration with storytellers, musicians, and artists of other genres.

Performances: 16 November, Parish Hall, Hartland; 17 Nov, The Guildhall, Glouc; 19 Nov, Falmouth Arts Centre; 22 Nov, QEH Theatre, Bristol; 23 Nov, Bridgwater Arts Centre; 24 Nov, "Rainbow over Bath"; 25 Nov, The Plough, Torrington.

Saruhachi-za Puppetry Workshop: There will be workshops on the day of the performance in Gloucester, Bristol, Bridgwater and Torrington. Takeshi Nishihashi has provided the following background notes.

Saruhachi-za is one of a number of puppet troupes on the island of Sado performing in the *Bunya* tradition. *Bunya* puppets, which first came to Sado in the 18th century, originated in Osaka in the 17th century. The

Handspring Artwork courtesy of The Puppet Centre Trust puppets, which are operated by one person, are similar in size but much simpler in design and technique to the three-person operated *Bunraku* puppets which later came to replace them. In contrast to the refined movements of *Bunraku* puppets, *Bunya* figures possess a simplicity which belies a powerful presence. *Bunraku* puppets amaze by their realism, while *Bunya* puppets endear themselves in the world of the imagination. Among Japan's rich puppet tradition both *Bunya* and *Bunraku* have developed exclusively as dramatic entertainment for adult audiences. Japan's most famous playwright, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, whose works now form a major part of the *Kabuki* repertoire, in fact, wrote mostly for a puppet theatre. He did this in the belief that art lies somewhere between fact and fiction, and that puppets are better suited to portray this world than human actors. The Saruhachi-za Puppetry Workshop is an introduction to the world of *Bunya* puppetry. Participants will be shown the operating techniques and encouraged to manipulate the puppets for themselves. They will also learn about the differences between *Bunya* and *Bunraku* and about the enormous potential that the simple *Bunya* puppets possess for deep dramatic expression.

For more information, see
www.hartland.swinternet.co.uk

Gounod's Faust at the Munich Opera House.

Penny Francis

A friend in Munich whose life is closely centred around the productions of the Munich Opera House (annual subsidy about what the Arts Council of England gets in total!) has sent me an issue of the house magazine in which there are several photographs of the puppets created for the production of *Faust* by The Puppet Players: directors Stefan Fichert and his wife, Suzanne Forster. My friend tells me the show has been a great critical success and that he has seen it three times and intends to see it again when it returns this July and in the 2001 season. The director is the renowned director David Pountney, formerly one of the great names of English National Opera, and his concept for Gounod's *Faust* is, to say the least, unusual. It has a modern setting, and the perennially relevant theme of man's search for eternal youth is represented by puppets which echo the Barbie doll aesthetic. Faust is "Ken"! In the photos Mephistopheles however is not obviously located in the Barbie family – he looks as stereotypically devilish as one could wish, and apparently ages, Dorian Gray-wise, as Faust grows younger. His acolytes are "The Mephisto Boys," a singing group dressed, like him, in shiny black suit, red tie and rubber wig. Speaking with Suzanne, it is clear that the production was controversial, and the first night audience shouted "boo" almost as much as "bravo." She herself as a principal puppeteer and co-designer with Stefan was invited onstage to take a bow, and found the force of the reception a novel and slightly frightening experience.

There are very many puppets in the production, the prototypes having been designed and made by Stefan Fichert, one of the world's great designer-craftsman-puppeteers. A choir of 96 singers, with a glove figure of an angel and a devil on each hand for the scene where Good and Evil fight for Faust's soul; five giant figures, some 16 feet high, of menacing bishops, with puppeteers within the heads, elevated on towers, wheel around a giant refrigerator, which is a metaphor for the confessional of Marguerite (Barbie); while the principal characters, which are held by the four professional puppeteers, one hand in the head and one in one hand of the puppet, integrate their performance with that of the singers, and, to some extent, mirror their appearance. The cast includes the great English bass-baritone John Tomlinson as Mephistopheles.

Suzanne has nothing but praise for the sensitivity and imagination of Pountney: he genuinely wished to collaborate with the puppeteers to get the most possible from the puppetry, and continually gave them space for ideas and experiment.

This is one more example of the discovery and intelligent employment of the medium of puppetry by mainstream theatre-makers. Our warm congratulations to The Puppet Players, to David Pountney and to all concerned. Suzanne and Stefan are now in Brazil and have more interesting projects to take up the rest of their year. There will be an exhibition of Stefan Fichert's work at Magdeburg.

Festivals and Events

Puppets in Sutton festival June-July (includes Toy Theatre Festival, with Poulter's "Turner," 8 July; Guild AGM & Puppet Auction 9 July): 020 8997 8236.

Innovative puppetry company Grupo Giramundo in "Cobra Norato," part of Brazil 500 Festival, at London's Riverside, 23-26 August: 020 8237 1111; www.riversidestudios.co.uk

Le Théâtre du Risorius present "The White Crane," inspired by Japanese folklore, daily at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Box Office 0313 221 9009.

visions2000, the UK's largest festival of international animated theatre, in Brighton 18-29 October, with "satellites" in Aberdeen, Belfast, Cardiff.... Festival Hotline 01273 643012 or heyworthpr@pavilion.co.uk to join free mailing list.

(Check out also "Carnivalesque," a survey of carnival irreverence from Brueghel to Louise Bourgeois: Brighton Museum & Art Gallery until 2 July; Nottingham Castle Museum 15 July-10 September.)

Henson Festival, NY, 6-24 September: www.HensonFestival.org

Charleville-Mézières International Puppet Festival will be hosting 200 companies 15-24 September. Contacts 7 Place Winston Churchill, 08000 Charleville-Mézières, France; fax 0033 3243 7669; www.marionnette.com

International Puppet Theatre Festival LUTKE 2000, 2-7 October: Lutkovno gledališče Ljubljana, LUTKE 2000, Krekov trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija; fax +386 61/316 892; festival.lgl@siol.net

5th International Shadow Theatre Festival in Schwäbisch Gmünd, 16-21 October. Rainer Reusch, Wolfäckerstrasse 23, D-73529 Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany; www.schattentheater.de

Lutsk nativity festival, Ukraine, 8-12 January 2001 (see last issue).

Follow-Ups

Russia

The daily newspaper *Segodnya* (16 3 00) published a Yevgeniy Yuryev article called "Women, Horses, and the Slave Trade." It covered the discussion in the Duma (parliament) of the *Kukly* programme broadcast on 12 March. A member of the Agrarian-Industrial Group, for example, took exception to the depiction of the Duma as a "brothel" and "our leaders as prostitutes," while Speaker Seleznev advised the show's director, Shenderovich, to show more respect for the "organs of power."

While the latest bout in the *Kukly* versus Putin match has not, so far as I am aware, been reported in the British media (though see *Le Monde* supplement, 4-5 June), it has had extensive coverage in the Russian. On Sunday 28 May NTV General Director Yevgeniy Kiselev said on the Itogi program that the leaders of Media-Most (the holding company run by the "oligarch" Vladimir Gusinskiy, regarded as one of the government's main political opponents) had been set terms by the government on the basis of which it would be left in peace (their premises had just been raided by the police), namely that Putin did not appear in the *Kukly*: "So, because someone at the top is upset by the presence of a rubber puppet representing Putin on the show," Kiselev said, "we decided to experiment by having one show without the Putin puppet." The *Kukly*, which immediately followed, had Putin as a personage so exalted that he could not be seen and whose pronouncements were brought down by Moses (Chief of Staff Voloshin). "Moses" announced that "He" should be addressed as *Gospod Bog* or GB for short (appropriate for an ex-KGB man).

Putin rematerialized in the next show, which dealt with Clinton's visit and had the heads of state trying to recruit each other for their respective secret services. These have perhaps been the best episodes yet in the programme's long history. Putin claims in his autobiography, *First Person*, to have watched *Kukly* "only a couple of times."

France

The spoof news show *Les Guignols de l'info* declared it was abolishing itself while on air, only to claim a few days later that the announcement had been a joke (short Reuters report in *The Guardian* 7 3 00). The Paris daily, *Libération*

(10 3 00), published a long, well-considered article by Denis Marquet, a philosopher and therapist, entitled "We Are All Guignols," from which these brief excerpts are drawn (the complete article, in French, is available from us):

"We are all guignols. When? As soon as we cease to be ourselves. As soon as to please someone or derive some gain we renounce the spontaneity of our nature and replace it with a certain fixed, conventional, rather repetitive attitude. Instead of the lively, flexible, creative beings that we are there is only a rigid, predictable mechanism. We manufacture a *persona*, a mask with fixed features. In other words, we become a caricature (*nous faisons le guignol*). We caricature ourselves.

Social life constrains us – whether we are aware of it or not. But public life and the presence of the media magnify the phenomenon to an extreme degree. Stereotyped language, the fixed smile, manufactured expressions which do not reflect any felt truth... The image eclipses real life. The *persona* overshadows the person. There is no longer a human being but a caricature of it.

That is what the Guignol reveals. You cannot caricature what is caricatural. The guignol-puppet only ever imitates a human being who transforms himself into a guignol. And he is comic only because his model is already profoundly so....

In this sense, the Guignol is salutary. Because he lifts the masks of the social game, reveals the impostures of the media circus....

But there something more serious here. The essence of the Guignol is to render manifest what is artificial and manufactured in the model. The joy of a guignol's laughter is that his model is at bottom responsible for his own ridiculousness. But when the puppet is used to mock natural characteristics (sexual preferences, physical features) it is the antithesis of the spirit of the Guignol, because you are no longer laughing at what someone does or says, you are laughing at what he is. It is low-grade laughter. A laughter which debases, because it is based on the negation of the other.

If the authors of the Guignols deserve criticism it is not because of the Guignols but because they themselves sometimes betray the spirit. At a time when everyone follows the pack, let us not throw the baby out with the bath water. The French do not have the most dangerous press in the world for the powerful, do we not need these disrespectful latex puppets so adept at throwing off the masks by giving them voice and movement?...."

Corrections and Clarifications

In the *wayang kulit* in Bali piece in the last issue: Carmencita Palermo does not come from Ravenna but from the Sicilian port-city whose name she bears. Regarding the discussion of language in performance, Bahasa Indonesia in general is not employed: they use Balinese (high, medium, low), Kawi; and sometimes Sanscrit, while Indonesian is used for jokes or for audiences speaking Indonesian only. It is perhaps better to say that *wayang lemah* is daytime *wayang kulit* which is performed as part of a temple ritual with gods and ancestors as its audience; it has no screen in southern Bali, but can be performed at night in northern Bali with a screen.

Housekeeping

Deadline for September *Newsletter* is **1 August**; November *Bulletin* **1 October**. The new editors have a strong preference for emailed submissions (to either or both Cariad Astles and Chris Abbott), but, if this is not possible, please send hard copy – for the time being at least – only to Dr Abbott at Kings College.

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